

10 Stories—7 Complete

ARGOSY

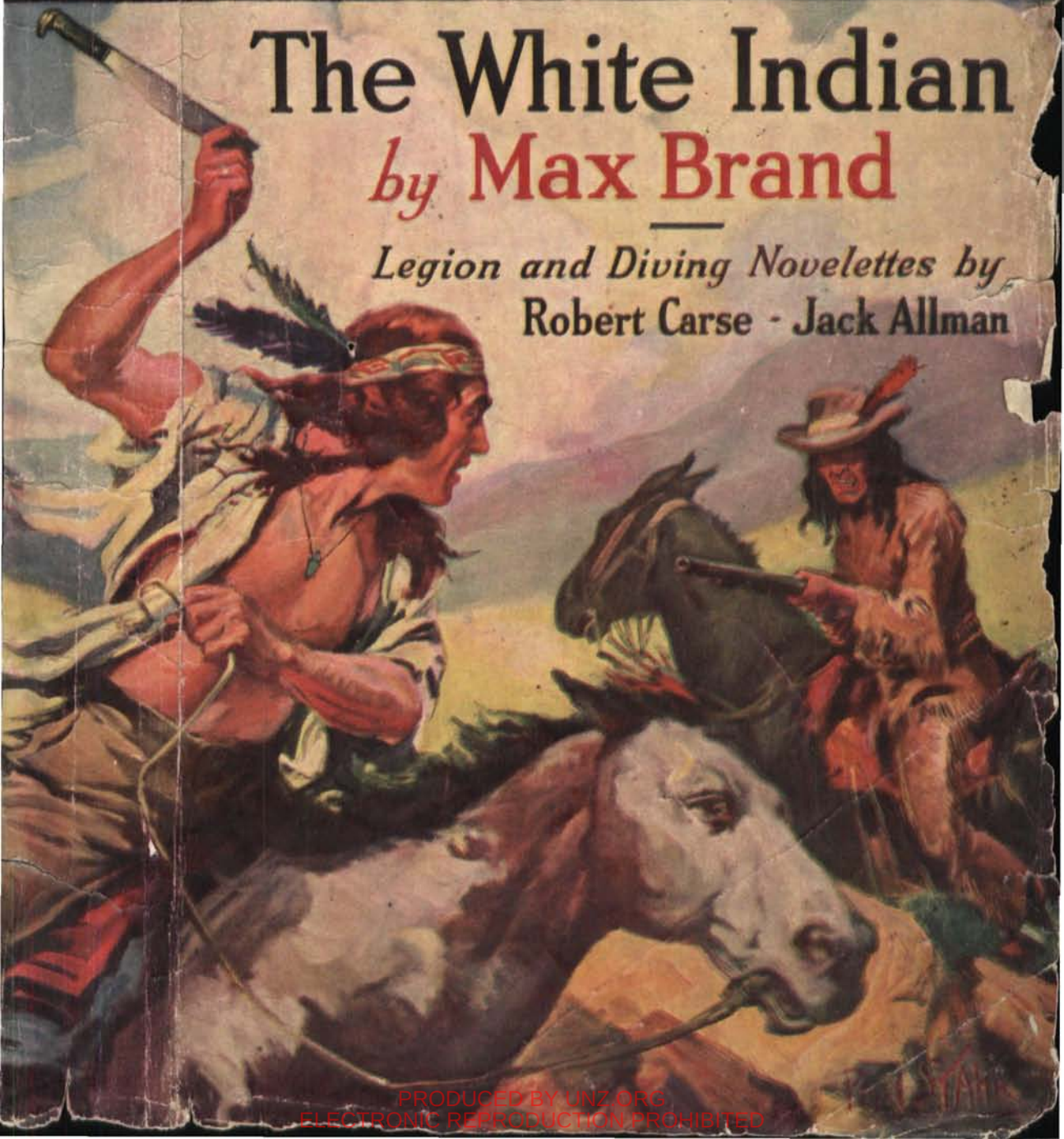
SEPT. 9 WEEKLY

ON SALE AUG. 30

The White Indian

by **Max Brand**

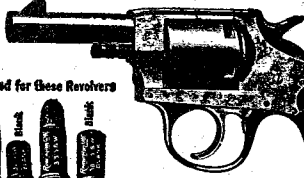
Legion and Diving Novelettes by
Robert Carse - Jack Allman



U. S. Double Action Revolver

A First
Class
Pocket
Gun

\$6.00



Cartridges Adapted for these Revolvers



Made in 3 Sizes
22, 32 & 38 Cal.

THE U. S. is a double action Revolver that is made by one of the largest firearm factories in America, if not the world. It is made in three standard sizes—the popular 32 Caliber, firing seven shots, and using 22 caliber Rim Fire Cartridges; 32 caliber, firing five shots and using 32 caliber S. & W. Center Fire Cartridges; and 38 caliber, firing five shots and using 38 caliber S. & W. Center Fire Cartridges. This revolver is constructed throughout of first class material, and has quick, smooth and positive action. Simply load the revolver with five or seven cartridges as the case may be, and you can fire as many well aimed shots in rapid succession, one after the other, just as fast as you can pull the trigger. The U. S. Double Action Revolver weighs little more than ten ounces, and is one of the lightest weight revolvers of its type on the market. It is an excellent house arm or pocket weapon!

BOYS! THROW YOUR VOICE



Into a trunk, under the bed or anywhere. Lots of fun fooling teacher, policeman or friends.

THE VENTRILO

a little instrument, fits in the mouth out of sight, used with above for Bird Calls, etc. Anyone can use it. Never fails. A 16-page course on Ventriloquism and the Ventrilo. All for 10c postpaid.



LUMINOUS PAINT

Make Your Watches, Clocks, Etc., Visible by Night. The very latest discovery in the scientific world. Hitherto, practically unobtainable except at an exorbitant price, we have at last succeeded in producing this remarkable LUMINOUS PAINT, which, applied to the surface of any article, emits rays of white light, rendering it perfectly visible in the dark. THE DARKER THE NIGHT, THE MORE BRILLIANT IT SHINES. Quite simple to use. Anyone—you can do it. A little applied to the dial of your watch or clock will enable you to tell the time by night. You can coat the push button or switch plate of your electric light, match boxes, and lanterns, other articles, make your own Luminous Crosses, Luminous Rosaries, etc. Bottle containing sufficient to make several small articles. Price 25c. Larger size 50c and \$1.00 postpaid.

BIG ENTERTAINER



180 Jokes and Riddles. 34 Magic Tricks. 54 Parlor Games. 73 Toasts. 15 Tricks with Cards. 50 Money-making Secrets. 10 Funny Readings. 3 Monologues. 21 Puzzles and Problems. 5 Comic Recitations. Out-cuts for Checkers and Chess, Dominoes, Fox and Geese, 9 Men Morris, Spanish Prison Puzzle, Game of Anagrams, etc. All for 15c postpaid.



Fighting Roosters

With your little finger you can make these miniature models of Game Roosters imitate in the most lifelike manner the evolutions of a FIERCE COCK-FIGHT. Endless amusement. Well made, with feathered tail. 10c. 3 prs. 25c. postpaid.



GOOD LUCK RING

Very striking, quaint and uncommon. Silver finish; skull and crossbones design; two brilliant, flashing, semi-sparkle out of the eyes. Said to bring good luck. Only 25c. 3 prs. 75c. postpaid.



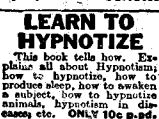
PLAY PIANO IN ONE HOUR

With this new VAMPING BOARD. No teacher needed. Surprisingly simple. Place the Vamping Board upright over your piano keys, and you are away to thousands of songs, dances, waltzes, fox trots, rag time, etc. No knowledge of music required. After using a few times, the Board may be dispensed with entirely. Price 15c. 3 prs. 45c. postpaid.



LEARN TO HYPNOTIZE

This book tells how. Explains all about Hypnotism, how to hypnotize, how to produce sleep, how to awaken a subject, how to hypnotize animals, etc. ONLY 10c p.p.d.



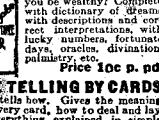
TELL YOUR OWN FORTUNE

With the aid of this dream book, you can tell your own future. Will you be lucky in love? Successful in business? Will you be wealthy? Complete with dictionary of dreams with descriptions and correct interpretations, with lucky numbers, fortunate days, oracles, divination, palmistry, etc. Price 10c p. p.d.



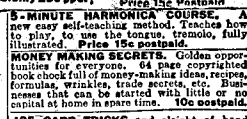
FORTUNE TELLING BY CARDS

64 pages tells how. Gives the meaning of each card, how to deal and lay them out. Everything explained in simple language. 10c postpaid.



LATEST CATALOG

A copy of our NEW CATALOG mailed on receipt of 10c, or the De Luxe Edition with cloth binding 25c. Bigger and better than ever. Only book of the kind in existence. Nearly 500 pages of all the latest tricks in magic, the newest novelties, puzzles, games, sporting goods, rubber stamps, unusual and interesting books, curiosities in plants and plants, etc., are procurable elsewhere. Remit by Coin, Money Order, Check or unsecured U. S. Postage Stamps, for all articles listed above. Canadian money, stamps and Postal Notes accepted if 10% added for Exchange.



PERFORMING 10c p. d. SKELETON

Jointed figure of a skeleton 14 in. in height. Will dance to music and perform various gyrations and movements while the operator may be some distance from it. Price 10c. 3 prs. 25c. postpaid.



JOHNSON SMITH & CO., Racine, Wis.

Address orders for all goods on this page to JOHNSON SMITH & CO. 980, Racine, Wis.

SOLAR TELESCOPE—\$1.25

NEARLY 3 FEET LONG



The new Excelsior Solar Telescope is a large and serviceable instrument, nicely made and accurately fitted. When extended it is almost three feet in length, and when closed measures not quite twelve inches in length. Telescopes of this size usually sell for many times this price, but by importing them direct from a large European manufacturer, we are enabled to offer them to our customers for ONLY \$1.25 each, at which price they ought to sell readily. The lenses are well made, the sides are brass bound, and the four sections are perfectly fitted. Here is your chance to obtain a Telescope for a nominal sum. It will be sent postpaid to any address upon receipt of \$1.25 in any convenient form. Postage stamps accepted if more convenient. 770 page Catalog of novelties, tricks, jokes, sporting goods, firearms, jewelry, novelties in seeds and plants, etc., 10c.

BLANK CARTRIDGE PISTOL

Protection against Burglars, Tramps & Dogs



Well made and effective; modeled on latest type of Revolver appearance. It is so constructed that it is enough to scare a burglar. When loaded it may be as effective as a real revolver without danger to its owner. It takes standard 22 Cal. Blank Cartridges obtainable everywhere. Price 50c. 100 prs. \$5.00. Blank Cartridges, 50c per 100. Holster (Cowboy type) for Blank Cartridge Pistol, 50c. Shipped by Express only.

LOOK 35c LOOK WONDERFUL INSTRUMENT

Greatest thing yet. Nice separate articles in one. Everybody delighted with it. Odd, Curious and Interesting. It is a double Microscope, a Compound, a Pocket Mirror, and a Laryngoscope. It is also an Opera Glass, a Telescope, a Compound, a Pocket Mirror, and a Laryngoscope. For examining eye, ear, nose and throat. It is worth all the cost to look over one painful cinder in the eye. Fold flat and use the pocket. Coming great—you need one. Don't miss it. Sent by mail. Only 35c or 3 for \$1.

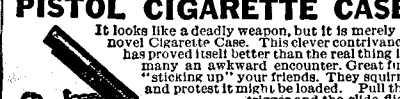
Electric Telegraph Set 15c

Here you are boys! A private electric telegraph set of your own for 15c! Lots of fun sending messages to your friends. Get two sets, hook them up as shown in the directions, for two-way messages for sending and receiving. No trouble at all to operate with these simple instructions that accompany each set. Operates on any standard dry battery obtainable everywhere. With this outfit you can learn to transmit and receive messages by the Morse International Code, and in a very short time become an expert operator. Mounted on wooden base measuring 4 1/2 inches. First class construction throughout. Complete with key, miniature Western Union Blanks, packed in a neat box with full illustrated instructions. Price 15c (battery) postpaid.



PISTOL CIGARETTE CASE

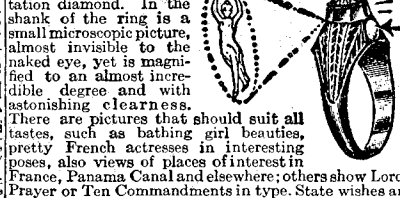
It looks like a deadly weapon, but it is merely a novel Cigarette Case. This clever contrivance has proved itself better than the real thing in many an awkward encounter. Great fun "sticking up" your friends. They swear and protest it might be loaded. Pull the trigger and the slide flies open disclosing the cigarettes. Well made, light and compact. Weight only 2 ounces. PRICE POSTPAID 25c



NOVELTY FRENCH PHOTO RING

A very great Curiosity

A classy looking ring, with imitation platinum finish, set with large imitation diamond. In the shank of the ring is a small microscopic picture, almost invisible to the naked eye, yet is magnified to an almost incredible degree and with astonishing clearness. There are pictures that should suit all tastes, such as bathing girl beauties, pretty French actresses in interesting poses, also views of places of interest in France, Panama Canal and elsewhere; others show Lord's Prayer or Ten Commandments in type. State wishes and we will try and please you. PRICES 25c, 3 for 65c, or \$2.25 per doz. postpaid.



JOHNSON SMITH & CO., Racine, Wis.

Address orders for all goods on this page to JOHNSON SMITH & CO. 980, Racine, Wis.

MAKE YOUR OWN RADIO



Enjoy the concert, baseball games, market reports, etc. This copy-righted book, 'EFFICIENT RADIO SETS' shows how to make and operate inexpensive Radio Sets; the materials for which can be purchased for a mere trifle. Also tells how to build a short-wave Receiver for bringing in foreign stations, Police calls, ship at sea, etc. ONLY 15c. postpaid.

SILENT DEFENDER



Used by police officers, detectives, night watchmen and others as a means of self-protection. Very effective. Easily fits the hand, the fingers being grasped in the four holes. Very useful in an emergency. Made of aluminum they are very light, weighing less than 2 ounces. Handy, compact, always ready for instant use. PRICE 25c each, 2 for 45c postpaid. Catalog 10c.

WONDERFUL X-RAY TUBE

A wonderful little instrument producing optical illusion in both surprising and startling. With it you can see what is apparently the bones of your fingers; the lead in a pipe stem, and many other similar illusions. Price 10c, 3 for 25c.



Expanding Matches

More fun than fighting with your wife. They look just like ordinary matches, but when lit with a food bag when lit, 10c matches to a box. PRICE 10c per box, 3 boxes \$2.50 per doz. boxes. Not suitable. Shipped by Express only.

ITCHING POWDER

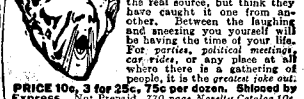
This is another good practical joke! The intense itching sensation it produces is felt by everyone, but themselves it is harmless. It is so simple to use that it is necessary to start the itching by rubbing a little of the powder on a person's hand, or on the back of the neck. The result is a vigorous scratch, then some more scratching, and so on. Price 25c or 75c per dozen. Shipped by Express.

ANARCHIST BOMBS

One of these glass vials dropped in a room full of people will cause more commotion than any other contrivance. The small entirely harmless explosive, 10c. per Box, 3 Boxes for 25c, 75c per doz. 3 prs. \$2.25 per doz. Shipped by Express.

SNEEZING POWDER

Place a very small amount of the powder on the back of your hand and blow it into the air, and watch them sneeze without knowing the reason why. It is most amusing to hear their remarks, as they never suspect the real source, but think they have caught it one from another. Between the laughing and sneezing you yourself will be saving the time of your life. For parties, political meetings, or any place, a little or a whole where there is a gathering of people, it is the greatest success. Price 10c, 3 for 25c, 75c per dozen. Shipped by Express. Not Prepaid. 770 page Novelty Catalog 10c.



COMICAL MOTTO RINGS

Lots of harmless fun and amusement wearing these rings. The motto is inlaid in finish to resemble platinum, with wording engraved as illustrated. Price 25c, 3 prs. 75c. postpaid.



MAGIC MADE EASY 250 TRICKS

An excellent book containing 250 Parlor Tricks, tricks with cards, coins, matches, kerchiefs, eggs, tin, etc., and a chapter on how to perform them. Profusely illustrated. Send for it to any address for only 10c. 25c copies for 25c postpaid.

GET INTO THE TOY BUSINESS AS OUR MANUFACTURER



Earn money casting our NEW LINE of hollow Toy Soldiers, Indians, 5 and 10c Automobiles, Airships, etc. No special place or experience necessary as we furnish full instructions with moulds and cooperate in selling; also buy finished goods. Chance of a life-time for man with small capital to get into this new and profitable industry. If you mean strictly business and are over 21 write at once for details as CHRISTMAS RUSH is now starting.

METAL CAST PRODUCTS CO.
Dept. B 1696 Boston Road, New York

BE A PASSENGER TRAFFIC INSPECTOR



BUS AND RAILWAY—SPLENDID OPPORTUNITIES

Active Men—19 to 55—needed now for Passenger Traffic Inspection work. Rapid pay advances after a few months' experience. Interesting, healthful, outdoor work; travel or stay near home. Complete our few weeks' home-study course and we place you in a position paying up to \$140 per month to start, or refund tuition. Free booklet. STANDARD BUSINESS TRAINING INSTITUTE, Div. 5009, Buffalo, N. Y.

RAILROAD STORIES

A MAGAZINE ABOUT RAILROADING
THAT APPEALS TO EVERY ONE!

Now 15c a Copy (20c in Canada) At All News-stands.

An infected hand may cost you your job

Lava Soap gets all the dirt—
Helps prevent Hand Infections

Dirt on your hands carries germs. When those germs get into any scratch or open place, infection can result. An infected hand usually means a lay-off. It may even cost you your job.

The best way to guard against hand infections is to wash your hands *clean* with Lava Soap. Lava gets all the dirt ordinary soap leaves—gets even ground-in grime around knuckles and nails in *less than a minute*. And Lava gets the germs, too. Against most common germs, it is 5 to 10 times as effective as many antiseptics.

Lava is safe for your hands because it contains glycerine—used in expensive hand-lotions—and other soothing oils. Lava is economical—it outlasts ordinary toilet soaps 3 to 1.

FREE—a full-sized cake of Lava. Address Procter & Gamble, Dept. 3913, Box 1801, Cincinnati, Ohio. Give full name and address.

LAVA SOAP

GETS THE DIRT—
PROTECTS THE SKIN

A Procter & Gamble Product



RIGHT NOW, WE ARE SAVING

\$50 a month



"It's not as easy to save now as it was three or four years ago, because our income has been reduced. But Dorothy and I decided, when I got my first raise after finishing that International Correspondence Schools Course, to save something each month—and it's fun! Once we had the amount up to \$100, and we will get it back there one of these days.

"If I had not taken that I. C. S. Course I probably wouldn't even have a job today. That training has been a life saver to me. It gives me a sense of security, to say nothing of a few promotions and raises in pay. The truth is, I expect to capitalize on it the rest of my life."

Is making both ends meet one of your problems these days? Then you must make yourself more valuable, and nothing will help you more than an I. C. S. home-study course. Mail the coupon for complete information.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

"The Universal University" Box 2157-F, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your booklet, "Who Wins and Why," and full particulars about the subject before which I have marked X:

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Architect | ☐ Automobile Mechanic |
| ☐ Architectural Draftsman | ☐ Plumbing ☐ Steam Fitting |
| ☐ Building Estimating | ☐ Heating ☐ Ventilation |
| ☐ Wood Millworking | ☐ Sheet Metal Worker |
| ☐ Contractor and Builder | ☐ Steam Engineer |
| ☐ Structural Draftsman | ☐ Steam Electric Engineer |
| ☐ Structural Engineer | ☐ Civil Engineer |
| ☐ Electric Wiring | ☐ Surveying and Mapping |
| ☐ Electrical Engineer | ☐ Refrigeration |
| ☐ Electric Lighting | ☐ R. R. Locomotives |
| ☐ Welding, Electric and Gas | ☐ R. R. Section Foreman |
| ☐ Reading Shop Blueprints | ☐ R. R. Bridge and Building Foreman |
| ☐ Telegraph Engineer | ☐ Air Brakes ☐ Train Operation |
| ☐ Telephone Work | ☐ Highway Engineering |
| ☐ Mechanical Engineer | ☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy |
| ☐ Mechanical Draftsman | ☐ Coal Mining Engineer |
| ☐ Machinist ☐ Toolmaker | ☐ Navigation ☐ Boilermaker |
| ☐ Patternmaker | ☐ Textile Overseer or Supt. |
| ☐ Pipefitter ☐ Tinsmith | ☐ Cotton Manufacturing |
| ☐ Bridge Engineer | ☐ Woolen Manufacturing |
| ☐ Bridge and Building Foreman | ☐ Agriculture ☐ Fruit Growing |
| ☐ Gas Engines ☐ Diesel Engines | ☐ Poultry Farming ☐ Radio |
| ☐ Aviation Engines | ☐ Marine Engineer |

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

- | | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------|
| ☐ Business Management | ☐ Business Correspondence | ☐ Signs |
| ☐ Office Management | ☐ Lettering Show Cards | |
| ☐ Industrial Management | ☐ Stenography and Typing | |
| ☐ Personnel Management | ☐ Commercial | |
| ☐ Traffic Management | ☐ Civil Service | |
| ☐ Accountancy and C. P. A. Coaching | ☐ Mail Carrier | |
| ☐ Bookkeeping | ☐ Railway Mail Clerk | |
| ☐ Secretarial Work | ☐ Grade School Subjects | |
| ☐ Cost Accountant | ☐ High School Subjects | |
| ☐ French | ☐ College Preparatory | |
| ☐ Salesmanship | ☐ Advertising | |
| ☐ Wallpaper Decorating | ☐ Illustrating | |
| ☐ Salesmanship | ☐ Cartooning | |
| | ☐ Lumber Dealer | |

Name..... Age.....

Street Address.....

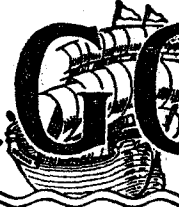
City..... State.....

Occupation.....

If you reside in Canada, send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

unhony unhony
egano

ARGOSY



Action Stories of Every Variety

VOLUME 241

CONTENTS FOR SEPTEMBER 9, 1933

NUMBER 1

SEVEN NOVELETTES AND SHORT STORIES

Loot (Novelette—Complete)	Robert Carse	30
<i>The Legion punishes a criminal</i>		
Skin Diver (Novelette—Complete)	Jack Allman	52
<i>An undersea fight for gold</i>		
Pants (Short Story)	Eustace L. Adams	70
<i>Fish Gage, aviator extraordinary, loses his dignity</i>		
Hot Goods (Short Story)	Ray Cummings	96
<i>A fast racket on a fast train</i>		
Men of Daring (True Story in Pictures)	Stookie Allen	104
<i>Clyde Beatty, king of the jungle monarchs</i>		
The Chinese Frog (Short Story)	James Lockette Hill	106
<i>Fighting for honor in the Navy</i>		
Blood Will Tell (Short Story)	William Merriam Rouse	135
<i>A murderous welcome in the Adirondacks</i>		

SERIALS

The White Indian (Six Parts—Part I)	Max Brand	4
<i>Kidnaped by Cheyenne warriors</i>		
The Diamond Specter (Three Parts—Part II)	Herbert L. McNary	80
<i>Death stalks the big leagues</i>		
The Lost Land of Atzlan (Six Parts—Part IV)	Fred MacIsaac	117
<i>Marooned with a vanished race</i>		

OTHER FEATURES

COVER DESIGN	Paul Stahr	
Airplane Drops House from Skies	Herbert E. Smith	29
Argonotes		143
Looking Ahead		144

This magazine is on sale every Wednesday

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, Publisher,

280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

WILLIAM T. DEWART, President

RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Vice-President

MESSAGERIES HACHETTE

PARIS: HACHETTE & CIE.

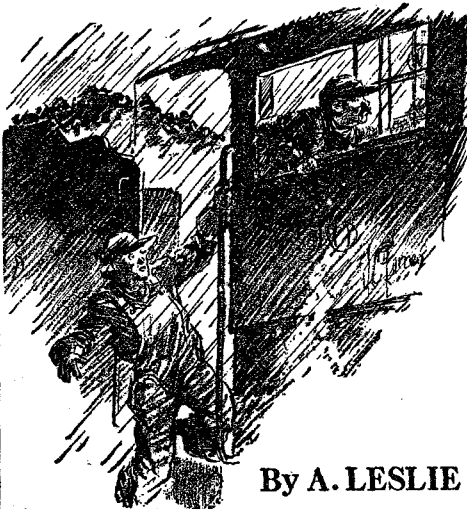
3, La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.4

111 Rue Réaumur

Published weekly and copyright, 1933, by The Frank A. Munsey Company. Single copies, 10 cents. By the year, \$4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; \$7.00 to Canada; \$7.00 to other foreign countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered. Entered as second class matter November 28, 1896, at the post office at New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879. The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright, and must not be reprinted without the publishers' permission. Title registered in U. S. Patent Office. Copyrighted in Great Britain.

Manuscripts submitted to this magazine should be accompanied by sufficient postage for their return if found unavailable. The publisher can accept no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts.

RUNNING WILD



By A. LESLIE

A "Different" Type of Fast-Action Novelette, from the Pen of an Adventurer Who Served in the French Foreign Legion.

Glory Bound

Novelette

By JOHN JOHNS

A Grim Engine-Cab Feud on the Mountain Division.

Other Rip - Roaring Fiction and Illustrated Features —in the October

RAILROAD STORIES

15c
20c in Canada

NOW ON SALE

STOMACH SUFFERERS

Amazed With Results of UDGA Treatment

"Gee, it's great to eat all I want again"

"Now I could eat nails or old shoes"

Acid Stomach Afflicts Millions

Hyperacidity (acid stomach), is, as every physician can tell you, the curse of millions. It is the most common cause of stomach or gastric ulcers as well as many other distressing conditions and there are comparatively few adults who can truly say it has never troubled them. In addition to stomach ulcers, acid stomach is often the direct cause of gastritis, indigestion, dyspepsia, excessive gas, pains before or after eating, heartburn, sour stomach, etc.

Double Acting Treatment Needed

To combat these conditions you need a treatment that will first counteract or neutralize the excess acid secretions and then protect, soothe, and tone the membranes or stomach lining in order that the process of healing may take place. This is the function of the Udga Treatment, the prescription of a noted specialist, and the excellent results it has produced in so many thousands of cases are directly due to this double-acting feature.

Read What Users Say

From among the 200,000 stomach sufferers who have successfully used the Udga Treatment, more than 54,000 have testified as to the marvelous results attained and the letters here reproduced are typical of the expressions of gratitude and appreciation that fill our files:—

A New Person

"I suffered untold agony for 7 years and grew worse all the time. Numerous doctors failed to give me relief. A friend gave me your address. I lost no time in sending for your tablets. Thank God they made a new person of me." Mrs. Margaret Seidel, 250 Sumpter Street, Brooklyn, New York.

Sincerely Recommends UDGA

"I now eat good, digestion is fine and sincerely recommend your tablets to anyone suffering from stomach trouble." Thomas Lessard, 107 W. Canton Street, Boston, Massachusetts.

Offered On
15 DAYS TRIAL

And now that the merits of this splendid treatment have been so conclusively proved, the distributors invite all sufferers to try it at their risk and are willing to send a full 15-DAY TREATMENT ON TRIAL. So if you can believe what your own stomach tells you—if you agree that freedom from stomach pains, distress and misery are the surest proof of results, send for this liberal trial offer and see for yourself what the Udga Treatment can do for that sick stomach of yours.

Clip and Mail Now

UDGA, Inc., 1868 Foot-Schulze Bldg.,
St. Paul, Minnesota

Please send me your 15-DAY TRIAL OFFER on the Udga Treatment. Also free copy of your book on stomach troubles, testimonials, affidavit of genuineness and \$1,000.00 Reward Offer to back it up. This does not obligate me in any way.

Name

No. and Street

City

State

In answering any advertisement on this page it is desirable that you mention this magazine.

The White Indian

By MAX BRAND

Author of "The Longhorn Feud," "The Masterman," etc.

Though he was white, Red Hawk counted himself a Cheyenne—and he knew the tribe would never accept him till he proved himself a fearless warrior



As the red man came through the door she fired

CHAPTER I.

OUT OF THE CORN.

IN weather like this, when the heat pressed like two thumbs against the temples, and the song of the locusts entered the brain with a dangerously rapid pulsation, Marshall Sabin insisted that his wife should wear a hat whenever she went out into the sun. But this day he was off hunting fresh meat, and she could overlook his wishes. She disliked the wavering of the soft straw brim up and down across her eyes.

He insisted that she wear moccasins,

also, when she left the house; but her feet were as tough as an Indian's, and she decided that she would go as she was. Still, she was a little uneasy, for even when her husband was far away she felt the sternness of his eye upon her.

That was why, when she picked up the bucket and climbed the eight steps from the floor of the "dugout" house to the ground level, she paused at the top of them and ran her eye over the horizon with a thrill of childish fear and pleasure. Between the homestead and the edge of the world there was only the flat of the plain, with the

shimmer and mist of heat-waves rising up from it. It was not often that she let her eye run out to the horizon in this way, because the immensity of it shrank their domain of ploughed land to a handful; so she turned her eye quickly to the cornfield, probing through the aisles and the dim shadows of it.

She was tall, but some of the lofty heads she could not touch. Many of the big leaves were broken down, sun-yellowed, and they added a crisp note to the rustling, whenever the wind moved among the stalks. To her ear it was a sound richer than the noise of sweeping silks.

Her three-year-old son, christened Lawrence, but forever to be called "Rusty" by his father, because he had her own red hair, was out in the fenced pasture making friends with the calf, while the cow very wisely paid no heed to the child, but stood guard between her offspring and the big wolfish dog that sat at the bars. They had picked up the dog more than a year before, expressly as a playmate for Rusty, and they thought it amusing to name him "Dusty."

She smiled as she thought of the coupled names, but the smile went out when she considered what labor it had been to haul the wood for that fence from far, far down the creek, and then to dig in the summer-hardened ground. However, if one is to have corn-land, the animals must be fenced away from it. Sometimes she yearned for the green Berkshire hills; yearned more than a sailor for the sea; but usually she felt in her body an excess of power that should be lavished on this hard land like water on the desert, until it bloomed and gave them wealth and ease.

She went on down the path which

her feet, chiefly, had worn towards the creek. A puff of wind blew a strand of her red hair loose and across her eyes, so she slid the bail of the bucket up to her elbow in order that she might put that lock in place under the thong that she wore, Indian-wise, around her head. Above the knot of her hair the thong was joined at the ends by a green scarab pin that was her only bit of jewelry. Her uncle, that man of wisdom and wide travels, had sent the pin to her from Egypt. Her husband so loved the green stone against the color of her hair that she had formed the habit of wearing it constantly.

WHEN she came to the bank of the creek, she looked down with a sigh at the shapeless flight of steps that had been cut into the ground, for it was a full thirty feet to the bottom, where the water was so thin a stream that it seemed barely sufficient to keep the pools full and fresh. The descent now was into the heat of an oven; the heat thrown back from the hard earth burned her skin so that she was glad, at last, to stand more than ankle deep in the water as she filled the bucket. There she remained for a moment, enjoying a breeze that somehow came wandering down between the sides of the ravine, carrying the song of a dove, monotonously contented.

At the top she paused once more, but without putting down the pail. Even the touch of the hot wind was cool to her as it dried the sweat on her face, on her throat, on her body.

She saw Rusty wandering towards the cornfield— forbidden ground— with the dog beside him. Moccasins and a pair of trousers were Rusty's outfit, and she smiled at the sleek, sun-blackened little body. She would have

been happier if he had been heavier of bone and jaw and brow, like his father; yet she rejoiced because he was so wholly her child. His eyes were her eyes—deep blue—and one day the sun-faded brows would be dark like hers. She knew that she was beautiful, and she knew that if God gave her son strength *he* would be glorious, too.

She went up the path towards the house. "Don't go into the corn, Rusty!" she called.

He turned to her, gloomily, his right hand gripping the fur on the back of the dog's neck. Silently he watched her out of sight, and she was smiling as she entered the house; for she knew that in two minutes he would be twisting through the narrow corridors among the stalks. However, the dog always barked to give her warning, whenever Rusty went beyond the appointed bounds.—Oh, let him forever pass the bounds! Let him leave this great, flat land and one day triumph in the cities of men!

She had hardly put down the bucket of water when Dusty began to bark. And with the barking merged the scream of her son, wildly raised, continued, pulsing, though not broken by the beat of his running feet. Was it a snake? Was it that other danger of which Marshall Sabin had dared to speak to her only once?

On the table lay the revolver which he had freshly loaded before he left. She caught it up as she leaped through the doorway and up the steps. It was the end! It was that second danger which, as Marshall Sabin had carefully explained, must be death for her.

Here, and there, and there, they broke out from the tall ranks of the corn. The sun burned hot on the red bronze of their bodies; the war-paint had turned their faces into goblin

masks; their yelling ran needle-wise through her brain.

BEHIND Rusty sprang a feathered chief. She could see the anticipation in his grin as his left hand reached for the boy and his right hand raised his rifle as a club. Rusty, seeing her, screamed more loudly still, and threw out his arms.

She was perfectly calm; she was as steady of hand and mind as if these had been figures in a book, figures invented by the loose imagination of some writer. As she steadied the revolver with both hands, she heard a frantic outburst of yelling; but that was no matter. Rusty was right in the line of her fire, but that was no matter either. She had to strike her target, so she struck it. The feathered chief behind Rusty, as she pulled the trigger, leaped into the air with a hand clapped to his wounded face. Then he dropped to one knee and levelled his rifle.

Little Rusty, at the same instant, tumbled headlong. She got to him, somehow, scooped him up. To her, just then, he seemed to weigh nothing. She could have carried him in the grip of one hand, by the hair of the head; and with the other hand she could have fought her way.

She was at the head of the steps when the bullet struck her, but she would not fall. She got safely down into the house, before she collapsed in a corner. Dusty stood over her, trying to lick her face; and the boy was screaming again:

"Mommy, I'm hurt! Mommy, I'm hurt!—Look, Mommy! Mommy, I'm bleeding! *I'm* bleeding!"

On the sod of the steps outside she heard two muffled footfalls, like the steps of a heavy cart, so she stretched out the right arm, with the gun gripped

hard, aiming at the door of buffalo hide. When it opened, she fired at the sunflash on the naked copper of the Indian's body. He lurched on in, falling. He fell all the way across the room, dropping his rifle and striking his head and shoulders with frightful force against the opposite side wall. Then he slumped sidelong on his face.

No more Indians tried to break through the open door, but she could hear the beat of their feet on the top of the house. The solid little mud building shuddered under the impacts.

She sat up, making three distinct efforts.

"Poor little Rusty!" she said, when she saw that the bullet which had driven through her own body had also scratched his shoulder. She wanted to take him in her arms, but she could not endure the thought of pressing him into the blood that streamed from her breast. It ran down into her lap so fast that it made a pool there.

"Poor Rusty, poor darling lamb!" she said.

The dog began to howl like a wolf.

"Mommy! Mommy! Look, look!" screamed Rusty, pointing, dancing with ecstatic terror.

She looked with dull eyes in the direction he indicated and saw the wounded Indian rising from the floor to one hand and one knee. He was naked, except for moccasins and breech-clout, and she knew by the shaking of his muscles and the glare of his eye that the last of his life went into the effort of drawing back his knife to throw.

The mother in her saw that he was only a boy, smooth-bodied, supple. Looking down the sights of the revolver, she saw the poisoning of the knife, but she could not fire; she could only watch the pumping of the blood from

his breast, and how it foamed on the floor. She thought vaguely that that was how this great, burning land was enriched for habitation—by the rubbing out of life in labor, and by the pouring forth of life and blood.

Then the knife struck the floor with a shivering note of music, as though a gong had been struck at almost infinite distance. The Indian boy slumped to the earth. Yet he continued to reach for the knife, a tremor running through his body, and he put his face against the ground and was still.

Dusty sat down beside the dead lad, pointed his nose rigidly at the unseen sky, and began to howl. It seemed to Kate Sabin that all the rest could be endured except the outcry of the dog.

SHE was in a stupor, from which a sense of unfulfilled duty pulled her back toward consciousness. She looked dully around her at the table which Marshall Sabin had made with so much care, at the broad-bladed hoes which had flashed and chimed so many hours in the cornfield, at the little hanging shelf on which stood copies of the Bible, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and "Robinson Crusoe." She had hardly opened the Bible, except to record in the fly-leaf the day and the hour when she, unaided, and with her own body and hands alone, had brought forth to life a man-child. This present pain of her dying, she realized, was far less than that agony had been.

There was a faint hope that this sun-blackened mite of a child would be spared, since the tribesmen sometimes adopted male children. If only she could dress him in his suit of clothes, crowd his feet into the shoes, brush his hair! Knowing that she had no strength for this, she pulled the thong from about her head and hung

around his neck the green scarab. She prayed that in the eyes of the Indians the little green scarab might be a token of a great chief.

If only the howling of the dog could be hushed!

Rusty's eyes were as round and white in his brown face as the eyes of a negro baby, and he had stopped crying. From outside, she heard the voice of a man, running towards the house and crying out in the Indian tongue some name or question, in a frantic note of grief. She could understand that, also; for there are not many sons in the tepee of a brave—and the dead boy was lying yonder.

She was seeing all this so dimly that she knew death was close. In her right hand was the revolver, with the muzzle pressed under her left breast.

"Rusty," she said, taking him in her arms, "they are coming—lots of Indians. But they won't hurt you if you're brave, and stand straight.—Darling, kiss me—love me!"

He flung his arms around her neck and strained at her with all his might. If those had been the mighty hands of Marshall Sabin, it seemed to her that even now the outflow of her life might be stopped. But there was only the howling, the dreadful howling of the dog; the outcry of the Indian who was running swiftly towards the house; the voice of her son moaning at her ear:

"Mommy, Mommy, don't go away from me!"

What instinct told the boy that she was going away beyond call—forever? It seemed to her then that she wanted only one thing, and that was to see the face of the first Indian who entered the house, so that she could offer the boy to him with a gesture of supplication. But she dared not wait, because Marshall Sabin had told her that even

though a woman was near death she was not safe from these Indians. So she pressed her face between Rusty's neck and shoulder, kissed his soft flesh and then pulled the trigger of the revolver as Marshall Sabin had taught her to pull it, with the squeeze of the entire hand.

CHAPTER II.

SWEET MEDICINE.

RUSTY SABIN, at eighteen, rode his horse behind Spotted Antelope up a ravine in the Black Hills. Although it was late summer, the water still ran strongly down the gorge, sometimes roaring like a wind, sometimes echoing from the walls like human voices. To Rusty Sabin, who knew himself only as Red Hawk, those voices rang with anger and reproaches, for there was wrath, he knew, in the heart of the Cheyenne who had adopted him. He had known it for years, and when he had asked Bitter Root, his foster-mother, what could be in the mind of the brave, she would answer:

"A wise man speaks only once, and not to a child."

However, he was about to pass from boyhood to manhood, since he must endure the torment and make the sacrifice of blood tomorrow. Therefore he knew that Spotted Antelope was about to speak, at last; and in respectful fear he had been riding ten strides behind the Indian.

When they came to a place where the ravine made an elbow turn, Spotted Antelope dismounted and hobbled his horse, and Red Hawk immediately did the same. It was nearing sunset, but the mid-summer day was close and hot, so that when the gray old Indian gathered his buffalo robe close about him it was plainly no more than a ges-

THE WHITE INDIAN

ture of ceremonial dignity. He pointed a shrouded arm towards a place where the current whirled in a deep pool, making itself smooth with speed.

"Purify yourself with water," said Spotted Antelope, "and afterwards I shall purify you with smoke. My son, you have made me unhappy, and now we are about to pray before the entrance to the Sacred Valley."

For some ordeal, Red Hawk had been nerving himself, but his breast grew hollow when he heard this name, for it was at the entrance to the Sacred Valley that Sweet Medicine, the hero who brought the buffalo to the Cheyennes, had last been seen by men. The foolish tribe had driven him out and had hunted him far away until, as he came to this gorge, before their eyes he had grown as tall as the clouds. His laughter had rolled from the sky, over the heads of his pursuers; and with one gesture of his hand he had broken from the rocky wall a vast pillar and left it leaning, ready to fall on any who ventured near. Now, at last, the warriors understood what manner of man he was. And stretching out their hands, they called to him like children to a father.

The boy was full of awe of that legend as he pulled off his leggings, his moccasins, his breech-clout, until there remained on him only a green scarab which was fastened about his neck by a leather thong. Part of his name had come from it, from that talisman, for among the mysterious figures inscribed on the under side of the beetle there was a clearly drawn hawk. The other half of his name he took from his dark red hair, the long braids of which he now wound tightly around his head, and fastened.

He tried the cold of the water, and its force, with his foot. Physically,

he was not true to the brawny Cheyenne type, who are the giants of the plains, though he was perfectly made for speed of hand and foot. Strength had been given him where it would best serve, and about ankle, knee and wrist the tendons were fitted close and neatly rounded off.

He looked at the obscure and shimmering bronze of his image as he leaned over the pool, his arms extended, his palms turned down, while he prayed:

"Under-water People, be good to me; and remember that I have sacrificed two good knives and an eagle feather to you."

Then he dived in, shooting himself out from the verge with a strong thrust of his legs. The currents were serpents that coiled on his body and caught at his hands, his knees, his feet. He went blind with effort before his hand touched a rock and he could draw himself shining and panting from the stream.

His father, in the meantime, had raised from a bit of tinder a small welter of flame. When Red Hawk had whipped most of the water from his body, he stood near the fire, into which Spotted Antelope was sprinkling sweet grass. Of the smoke he took imaginary handfuls and passed them slowly over his naked son, while the fragrance entered the nostrils of Red Hawk. It made him feel much better, and his heart grew lighter. He seemed to cast off evil and become a truer Cheyenne upon whom perhaps the eye of the mystical Sweet Medicine might fall with pleasure.

WHEN this ceremony ended, Spotted Antelope led the way onwards, very slowly, for that is the way a man should walk when he

wants the spirits to see his whole heart laid bare.

Thrice he paused, and at the fourth halt Red Hawk dropped without command to his knees, for they had passed the elbow turn of the ravine and he saw before him the entrance gate of the Sacred Valley. Red Hawk's mind conceived a form that extended to the sky and rested one hand on the leaning stone. He fell on his face, groaning.

After that, he dared not move. He had bruised his knees and elbows; the rock was cold against his belly; but he only ventured to unclothe his eyes slowly, in order to see that his father—be his name praised!—had not left him alone in this dreadful place. Spotted Antelope now sat cross-legged, tamping the tobacco into his pipe with four ceremonial pressures of his thumb. With four gestures he stroked the stem of the pipe, fitted it to the bowl, and lighted the tobacco with a coal which he had brought from the fire of purification.

Therefore it was sacred smoke he drew at, his withered cheeks pulling into great hollows as he puffed.

Now he blew a breath to the ground, a breath to the sky, four breaths to the four corners of the world, and a last cloud of smoke towards the gate of the Sacred Valley. The old man prayed:

"Listeners underground, be quiet long enough to hear me. Listeners above, take pity on me. Sweet Medicine, I am asking not for horses or buffaloes or scalps, but only honor for my son.

"If I have done bad things, I have already been punished. You know that Short Lance was my son, and that a woman killed him; but after she died I would not take her scalp because I saw

a male child. He stood straight; he was not afraid; I took him home and gave him to my squaw. I knew that the spirits had taken away one son to punish me, but they had given me another because they did not wish to break my heart.

"I began to be glad. Red Hawk was both bold and happy. Soon he was the swiftest runner among the boys, and he could live in the water like a fish. The wild horses could not fling him from their backs.

"But I grew unhappy, for he left my tepee too often and sat beside the white man, Lazy Wolf, the interpreter and hunter, learning the tongue of the white man until he had two speeches—and is it not hard enough to make one tongue talk straight? Also, from Lazy Wolf he learned the same evil laziness of lying for hours looking at the fire as though it were herds of buffalo in a time of famine.

"In our proper ways, in practicing the scalp dance and in the sham battles he took no delight, and at the fighting with wooden knives among the boys, he smiled. Still, he laughed much, and talked much among the women and with the white man, and for three seasons he has shrunk from the initiation and the sacrifice of blood without which he can never go on the war-path or be a man.

"For these reasons I am sad, and I bring him here to your feet, Sweet Medicine, asking you why my own son was taken from me, when he had become a man, and why this son was given to me, who seems to be a woman? His foot is swift and his hand is sure. In wrestling he throws all the young men by the force of many cunning devices; but let him now hunger for glory and a good name, and for the shedding of blood.

THE WHITE INDIAN

"Have pity on me, Sweet Medicine. I have tried to be a good man. I have taken scalps and sacrificed some of them. I have made a scalp shirt; there are ceremonial paintings on my lodge. And now that I am old and my horse-herd shrinks and my hands weaken, let Red Hawk bring riches and triumph back to my tepee again."

With this the old man ended by pressing his hands to the ground, raising them to the sky, and extending them finally to the entrance gate of the Sacred Valley.

"Stand!" his father suddenly commanded Red Hawk, and the young man rose slowly to his feet. "Pray!" said Spotted Antelope.

Before the eyes of Red Hawk there was no longer the glimmering vision of the giant between earth and sky. He wanted to pray that he should be given victory in war; many scalps; and above all, the counting of coups. But all he could find to say was:

"Sweet Medicine, give me whatever is in your heart to give to a Cheyenne!"

He had barely finished speaking, his hands were still outstretched when Spotted Antelope fell to the earth with a great cry. Red Hawk saw a miracle performed before his eyes. A great night owl sailed out past the leaning pillar!

The boy fell flat beside his foster-father, and close above him he heard the pinions in the air like the whisper of an unknown word.

Afterwards, with the cold of his dread still working in his spinal marrow like worms of ice, he heard the broken, gasping voice of his father muttering:

"Give thanks, my son! For this give thanks! Your prayer has been heard!—Oh, son of my lodge, Sweet Medi-

cine has heard your prayer
forth to you."

CHAPTER III.

LAZY WOLF.

THE darkness was coming down when they returned to their horses, and the voices from the distant cataract in the Sacred Valley followed them down the lower cañon. Red Hawk had not been allowed to dress. He had to keep his clothes in a bundle, all the way back through the hills until they came to the ring of plain in which the camp was pitched.

The moon was up, now, silvering the white new tepees. Through the entrances the rosy firelight made a step or two into the night.

Spotted Antelope, swathed to the ears in his robe, went on slowly, while the boy followed at a little distance. He knew that for his foster-father the world had been new-made; and in himself he seemed to feel the working of a new spirit, a transfiguring glory that could not be far away.

They went not to their own lodge, but to that of Running Elk, the great medicine man. Mysterious fumes of sweetness were rising from the fire in his tepee; the two squaws were at some beadwork in the firelight; and Running Elk rose on the farther side of the lodge to greet his guests. He was a tall, bent man; his long face placidly cruel and smiling with age. When he heard the story of the apparition of the owl, he made them sit down and smoke a ceremonial pipe with him, his low-lidded eyes constantly fixed on the boy. At last he spoke these words:

"It was truly Sweet Medicine. If he came out in kindness, then Red Hawk shall be so great that he can

pull the rain down out of the sky and raise the buffalo from the ground for the Cheyennes. If he came in anger, then all the tribe will be shamed by Red Hawk and every father will give thanks that he has not such a son."

After that they walked to their own lodge, Red Hawk still naked. But no one looked at him, because it was clear, from the swathed form of the father and the bare skin of the son, that a ceremony was going forward or a vow being performed. Not till they had come into their own tepee; not till Spotted Antelope with trembling hands and a cloud of smoke from sweet grass had purified his scalp shirt, his shield of painted bull's hide, Bitter Root, his squaw, his own person and the clothes of Red Hawk, did he permit his son to dress again.

The big face of the squaw, sodden, wrinkled, loosened by time, turned slowly from one of them to the other, as she sat cross-legged; she knew better than to ask a question. Red Hawk went to the great pot where buffalo meat simmered over the fire night and day, and would have helped himself, but his father forbade him.

Then, in phrases that were separated by moments of hard breathing, Spotted Antelope told his squaw what had happened, and what interpretation had been placed upon it by Running Elk. She, when she had heard, covered her face with a robe, as a decent woman should do when she hears of a mystery.

AFTER a time, Spotted Antelope left the tepee. Bitter Root came to the seated boy and put her hands on his head, while her guttural voice prayed:

"Let the scalps of the Pawnees, O Underground Listeners, O Listeners Above—let the scalps of Pawnees

hang from the center pole and dry above our fire!"

She had not turned her thoughts to glory or riches, for Bitter Root was a practical woman.

When she in turn was gone, Red Hawk leaned against a feathered backrest for a time, gloomily. His stomach raged for the food that had been forbidden. He thought of unrolling his bed and lying down to sleep. Instead, he suddenly found himself on the way to the tepee of Lazy Wolf.

At this season of the year, Lazy Wolf's tepee was different from the others. In the winter the white man might use a regular lodge of the skins of buffalo cows, unless he left the tribe and went to live alone in a forest cabin through the cold season. But in the summer he used a strong, light canvas that was but a tenth of the weight of the hides, and therefore wonderfully portable.

The firelight glimmered through its frailer texture as Red Hawk stopped outside the entrance flap. The cheerful voice of Lazy Wolf called him in at once.

"How!" said Red Hawk, as he stood on the threshold with raised hand.

"How!" said Lazy Wolf.

As usual, he reclined on a heap of buffalo robes, with a book resting on his stomach. A lantern gave him light. It was fed with a strange, treble-refined fat which was odorless, and the flame was protected by a stretched, transparent membrane. Red Hawk had seen the contrivance many times before, but it remained a great marvel, and a strong evidence of medicine.

Blue Bird, the daughter of the white man, merely turned and smiled at the visitor. She had hair and eyes as dark as those of her Cheyenne mother; but

the hair was like wavering silk, and she had that olive complexion which is easily illumined. To Red Hawk, she was the chief miracle to be found in the tepee of Lazy Wolf; and because he feared her, he always joked a good deal when she was near.

She was stirring the meat pot over the central fire. It was not such a huge affair as that which appeared in the lodges of the Cheyennes, and in this summer weather merely a handful of flames was maintained beneath it; but out of that smaller cauldron there came savors more varied and pleasant than the greasy, eternal smell of stewing back-fat and dried buffalo meat.

Now, unless the sensitive nostrils of Red Hawk betrayed him, the flesh of small birds was seasoning and softening in that pot. He turned, half faint with hunger.

"Sit down by me," said Lazy Wolf, turning on one elbow, but not enough to disturb the comfort of his fat paunch, on which he laid his open book, face down. "Sit down here and tell me the news of your ride."

He pushed a pair of spectacles up on his forehead and looked at Red Hawk with his misty blue eyes. He began to comb his beard. He never shaved himself clean; he merely shaped, from time to time, the hair that grew on his face, trimming it to a point below the chin. All day long his fat fingers would be curling and uncurling it. Truly, he had earned his name of "Lazy," for he never bestirred himself except to hunt a little, now and then. He rarely went to the feasts; he took small part in the ceremonies; and above all, he would never go on the warpath.

He was valued by the Cheyennes, however, for three important reasons. One was that he was a perfect inter-

preter and a shrewd trader in their behalf. Another was that in time of winter famines his accuracy at long range made his rifle worth more in getting meat than all the guns and arrows of the tribe. Finally, when on two occasions the Pawnees had found the camp stripped of its young warriors and had tried to rush it, the guns of the white man had seemed to be everywhere. That was why they dealt out to him his full name of "Lazy Wolf." He was prized, revered, and at the same time despised by all the Cheyennes.

RED HAWK sat down against a back-rest and lounged. He pulled out a long, heavy knife and began to spin it in the air, so that it came down on its point, almost always with the first try. No man among the Cheyennes could rival him in that clever trick. He did it with an air of indifference; but when his eyes rose following the flash and spin of the blade, they always flicked aside a trifle, in the hope of finding admiration or wonder in the eyes of the girl.

However, as usual, she was a disappointment; she seemed to regard his knife-work as no more than so many conventional gestures of the hand.

"There is not a great deal for me to tell, Lazy Wolf," said Red Hawk. "What has happened in the camp?"

"There is not a great deal for me to tell, either," said Lazy Wolf, smiling a little. "But the three braves who went towards the western mountains still have not come back, and people are saying that Wind Walker may have met them."

"Could Wind Walker kill three Cheyenne braves?" asked the boy, staring.

"He's done it before," answered

Lazy Wolf. "He has twenty-five scalps to his credit, people say."

"You, Lazy Wolf, are a white man," said Red Hawk, angrily.

"So are you," smiled the other.

"But my heart is all red!" exclaimed the boy.

"Good!" cried the Blue Bird, and he thought that the fire could not light her eyes as much as they shone now with her smiling.

"Besides," said Lazy Wolf, "I have seen the scalps and have talked to Wind Walker."

"Without aiming your rifle at his heart?" cried Red Hawk.

"You have to understand what I've told you before," said Lazy Wolf. "I am only a Cheyenne while I'm in their camp. But if it makes you any happier, I'll tell you that Wind Walker hates me because I stay with the tribe, and therefore I can't like him very well.—As a matter of fact, I went to see him in the hope that I could find out why he spends his life hunting down the tribe."

"And why?" demanded the boy.

"Because he happened to have a wife who was murdered by the Cheyennes—there's the only reason. Some white men put a value on women. Not I—but some white men like their wives and daughters better than herds of horses and hundreds of scalps." He laughed and looked at the girl. "Give Red Hawk some food," said Lazy Wolf to her.

"My father says that I should fast," answered the boy.

"In your father's lodge, therefore, you ought not to eat. But this is a different tepee, and I can see by the way your nostrils tremble when the steam of the pot blows to them that you're starving.—Blue Bird, give him some of that stew."

Her lips and her eyes parted for a moment before she could cry out, "No!—Spotted Antelope has given commands."

"In his own lodge.—But this lodge is mine," said Lazy Wolf. "Bring him some food!"

SHE brought two bowls, one filled with a stiff mash of cold boiled corn and the other with the stew; then she retreated, walking backwards, her eyes fixed on Red Hawk so that he actually seemed to feel them, like the touch of a hand.—Suppose he should so much as look at the food, how would he sink in her esteem to the level of a blasphemous character, a disobedient son?

So he turned his head towards Lazy Wolf, saying, "What is the white name of Wind Walker?"

"Marshall Sabin," said the other. "He is a big man, my lad.—Not young, now; a good forty-five years old, I should say. But he is as tough as ash and oak. By his hands and his jaw and his eyes you can see that he's a man-killer."

"Some of your warrior Cheyennes are bigger men, and younger; but I wouldn't gamble on their chances if he managed to get a grip on them.—Are you wasting that good food, you hungry coyote?"

Lazy Wolf smiled. He was always smiling, making light of the most sacred of the Cheyenne customs, which was the reason that old Running Elk and some of the other famous makers of medicine hated him with a special fervor.

"I think of my father," said the boy uneasily.

"Then I shall take the food away," broke in the girl, hurrying across the lodge.

"No, let it alone," commanded Lazy Wolf. "Perhaps he'll change his mind. And now that he's about to become a man, it's good for him to endure temptation."

The father began to badger her, saying, "If she obeys her husband as well as she wants you to obey your father, she'll make a fine squaw for one of the bucks.—And she's fifteen, Red Hawk. High time that she should marry and let me make a little profit on her. There was Crazy Bull, only this morning, who tied eight horses outside my lodge."

"But I had to let him take them away again. And yet there were eight of those horses against the girl—and they were good ponies, too, the pick of his herd. Crazy Bull spread out enough bright beads to cover three suits of clothes. But I had to let those go, too, because when I looked at Blue Bird, she was making faces."

"Crazy Bull is a very strong brave," said Red Hawk. "True, he has a broken nose; but he is a great hunter. He has a good many children in his lodge, but he has three old squaws to take care of them. You should marry Crazy Bull, Blue Bird."

"I would," answered the girl, "but I can't leave my father with no woman to take care of him."

"Tut, tut!" said Lazy Wolf. "I would have a good handy squaw in the lodge in no time—a thorough worker, and one who never tires of dressing hides, carrying water, cooking, sewing on beads, making arrows, molding bullets. One with hands that are busy all day long."

"There's Grass Woman, for instance, who has gone back to her father since Wind Walker met her husband, one bright day. For one horse—for a colt, even—I think I

could buy her. And she's the proper type; built close to the ground, and able to bear burdens.—She would never waste her time making dresses of white doeskin that fit her body to the hips as though she had dipped herself in water—and all for the sake of honoring the initiation day of a boy—a mere long-legged, time-wasting boy named Red Hawk."

RED HAWK sat up and looked at the girl; at the white doeskin dress that held the roundness of her body as the skin holds a fruit, and then flared out in a wide skirt of many folds. It was true, he suddenly realized, that she was fifteen and marriageable, according to the Cheyenne custom. She was looking at her father with a quiet eye, darkened by anger, but the flush began to run up her throat and over her face.

"Lazy Wolf will still be talking," said she, "but talking won't raise the sun."

"Look Red Hawk in the eye, if you dare," said Lazy Wolf. "Look him in the eye if you can, and tell him that the dress was not made in honor of his day!"

She turned her head towards the boy; but before their eyes met, she gave up with a faint cry and ran out of the lodge.

Red Hawk sprang to his feet, remembered himself, and sat down, trembling.

Lazy Wolf continued to stare, rather gloomily, towards the entrance flap, but he said, "Now eat, my son—and tell me what is in your mind."

Red Hawk hesitated. He wanted very much to follow the wishes of his father, but the advice of Lazy Wolf swayed him like a wind; and just now a special fragrance rose to him from

the delicious stew. Instantly his grasp was on the bowl.

CHAPTER IV.

BORROWED STRENGTH.

WHEN he had eaten, there was some shame in his mind, but much contentment in his belly. He washed his hands; filled a pipe, without ceremony, and smoked it in long, slow puffs. He told his friend the story of the day. When he had finished with the prophecy of Running Elk, such an awe came over him that he shuddered, unable to lift his eyes from the ground. Then he heard the careless voice of Lazy Wolf saying:

"The twilight, of course, is the proper time for an owl to go out hunting; and you were in front of the valley gates just at sunset. That owl was not the spirit of Sweet Medicine. He was just a big hungry stomach that was thinking neither of Red Hawk nor of Spotted Antelope, but of field mice and rabbits or anything else he could get into his maw."

The heart of Red Hawk fell.

"I was brave because the owl flew over me, but now I'm afraid again," he said. "Yet there was a spirit in the bird. His wings stretched farther than across the floor of this lodge. His eyes were golden balls of fire. His wings whispered as he slid over my head and said a word."

"Well," said Lazy Wolf, "if the flying of that owl gives you any comfort for to-morrow, keep on believing in it. Are you afraid of the blood sacrifice, my lad?"

Red Hawk half closed his eyes. He realized that the answer was a thing which he could never endure to speak to any Cheyenne; but it was easy to

confess even shameful truths to this man. Therefore he gasped:

"I am afraid! I think I could stand the cutting of my flesh, even with the notched knives, and the tying of the ropes into my body. But when I think of how they must be torn out again, I am sick!"

"I would be, too," said this surprising hero and vagabond.

"You?—Even you?" exclaimed Red Hawk. "But you are a white man! Only your name is Indian."

"At least," said Lazy Wolf, "there are a few brave men among the whites—like Wind Walker. He is brave exactly as the Cheyennes are. You remember when he was captured once and tortured, they could not make him stop cursing them and daring them. Yet before the soldiers broke through the camp and saved him, he had been hanging on the pole for two hours. He is brave like the Indians; he takes scalps like them; and he loves blood as they do.

"But there are no white men who have ever gone through the blood sacrifice which you're going to make in order to prove that you're able to be a man and a warrior. Every white man in the world would have disgust up his nostrils and in his bowels at the mere thought of giving his body to be tormented."

The flame of the fire leaped for the last time. Red Hawk, puzzled, merely said:

"For the white face and the white mind there is one world; but when the heart is red, there is another."

HE stood up, for suddenly he wanted to be away from this lodge before he had to endure again the quizzical smile of Lazy Wolf.

"Go on, my lad," said the other.

"If I thought that it would do you any good, I'd go to the lodge to-morrow and look on through all that beastliness for the sake of cheering you along. But after the first knife cut, nothing will be of any use to you except a crazy, red-eyed frenzy. Good-night. Sleep if you can; and if you have to go through with the torment, try hard to make a wild man of yourself."

Red Hawk went out into the night. As he stood outside the entrance flap, looking over the moon-washed hides of the tepees, and at the stars which scattered down towards the dark horizon like golden sparks, he thought of Blue Bird; and it seemed to him that her touch and the sound of her voice alone could cure his lonely fear.

However, it was a matter about which he must see men. Only the day before it had appeared to him that he had a hundred friends. But in this time of need the many shrank to two. Of these, Lazy Wolf had merely smiled and bantered. There remained the second friend, Standing Bull.

Already, at twenty, Standing Bull was a famous warrior because of an exploit of the year before, when, in the narrows of a ravine at sunset time, as he fled with a companion before the rush of a war-party of Pawnees, his friend had been wounded and the youth had turned back to hold the narrows until the injured man could draw away. With his rifle and lance he had killed two of the Pawnees, had counted grand coup on both, and had secured the scalp of one of them. Before the Pawnees could surround him, he escaped. For that heroic effort he was given the name of Standing Bull.

In front of the lodge of his friend, Red Hawk now paused and looked for a moment at the crescent moon paint-

ed above the entrance flap. Black in the moonshine, he knew that it was a rich blue in daylight. Within, the brave was chanting a song, very softly:

*"Braid your singing with my song
And the music will be strong."*

And the voice of Bending Willow, the wife of Standing Bull, joined with an undertone in the chorus:

*"One voice cannot rise so high,
But two voices reach the sky."*

Then Red Hawk, unwilling to hear more by stealth, called, "Standing Bull, a friend is at your door."

Bending Willow cried out in alarm, but Standing Bull said:

"It is only Red Hawk. Hush and be still.—Come in, my friend."

Red Hawk entered, instantly drawing shut the entrance flap behind him, for he saw the girl reclining on a willow bed, still half struggling to raise her head from her husband's lap, while he restrained her and continued to brush her hair with a porcupine comb. As a last resource, she tried to throw the corner of a robe over her head, but Standing Bull prevented this, also, saying:

"This is no storm to tear up willows by the roots; this is no flood to rip them out of the banks and tumble them down the stream; this is my friend, Red Hawk.—Lie still. Hush! He wants no greeting.—Sing some more of the song. If Red Hawk is to be a brave to-morrow, he will want a squaw the next day, and he will need to know love songs!"

IN a moment the three were laughing and singing, while Red Hawk capered around the fire in a slow dance which he finished by kneeling in

front of his friend, and crossing his arms on his breast.

The wife of Standing Bull, when she saw this, at once slipped away to the side of the lodge near the pole where the painted shield of bull's hide was hanging, with a festoon of eagle feathers suspended from the center of it. Twice it had been slashed by bullets, and three times it had turned the point of a charging lance.

The brave now stood up, and Red Hawk extended one hand to him. Looking up, he saw nothing but the ragged scars on the breast of Standing Bull, the proof of how he had torn the rawhide thongs out of his flesh quickly at the blood sacrifice. He had made it in his fourteenth year. He was big, with a shoulder like a buffalo bull, and legs like a deer's, for speed.

"What is it?" asked the warrior. "If you hold out your hand to me, take whatever I have to fill it. There are nine good horses tethered outside my lodge; they are yours. There are two rifles—and knives—and that bag is filled with beads. You see the pemmican, the dried meat, the knives, the robes, the back-rests. Whatever I have is yours, except the scalp of the center pole, and the coup stick and the shield and the medicine bag. These are my medicine, and they would not be good for you. But if you want something more, tell me and I shall kneel with you and pray for it, or go out with you to fight for it."

Red Hawk looked higher still, into the face of his friend. There was still a boyish softness and beauty about the features of Standing Bull. It was only when he stared fixedly, as now, that one could see how the nostrils pinched in a trifle, and how the eyes grew dangerously bright.

"I have not come to beg for horses

or guns," said Red Hawk. "I want some of the strength of your heart."

"You would have it all, if I could dip it out with both hands and pour it upon you," answered the brave. "I still remember, whenever I see still water, how the Underwater People fixed my feet in the quicksands, long ago—six years, or five years ago. All the other boys were gone from the side of the pool except you, and you were small. Nevertheless you dived for me, like a bright fish. You tangled your hands in my hair and jerked me free. We swam to the bank and lay gasping and biting at the air. With every breath I tasted, I knew that life was good, and that you were my brother. When you are a warrior, Red Hawk, we shall exchange blood, and after that we shall be like the son of one mother."

At this, Red Hawk looked suddenly down because tears were stinging his eyes, and such weakness shamed him.

He was able to say, at last: "Tomorrow I must go into the Medicine Lodge to make the sacrifice. I am weak at heart, Standing Bull."

He heard Standing Bull sigh. The sinewy hands of the Cheyenne raised him to his feet. "Come," said the warrior. "We shall go out and face the east until the sunrise, and I shall give you strength."

But as Red Hawk left the lodge, he saw the eyes of the young wife lift from the beading of a moccasin with a flash of scorn. That glance kept rankling coldly in his vitals, all the way to the low hillock outside the camp, where he stood with Standing Bull through that night, facing east.

When the color of the dawn began, the warrior took his hand and held it, as the huge brilliance rolled over the edge of the earth and started up the hill to heaven.

Red Hawk smiled as he looked at the display. His hand was warm from the clasp of his friend; and he felt that borrowed strength had filled his heart.

CHAPTER V.

THE TEST.

WHEN Red Hawk returned to the tepee of his father, he found the sixty-year-old warrior doing a hatchet dance around and around in narrow circles before the lodge, now and then springing into the air to strike down enemies. Other people passed back and forth before the tepee, never regarding the dancer. The younger boys were taking out the horses of the camp to graze, but they would be back in time to enjoy the spectacle of the blood sacrifices.

Spotted Antelope stopped dancing when he saw his foster-son. "You are almost late!" he called to Red Hawk. "The sacrifices already have begun, and you must be painted. Quickly, my son!"

They hurried to the lodge. Outside were women and children, waiting for the happy moment when some tortured youth fainted in the lodge and was taken from the enclosure to be dragged around and around at the end of a rawhide rope tied into his flesh. Then the young boys would throw themselves at the prostrate body so as to jerk it free; and if that failed, the horseman halted, backed up twenty feet, and made his pony bolt away at full speed. The whiplash at the end could not fail to tear the rawhide free from the tough flesh. More than once, from his childhood on, Red Hawk had seen that ceremony, and the dull noise of the rending flesh was still fresh in his mind and felt in his body. Now

he saw some of the youngsters dance on their toes, pointing at him, gibbering to one another. Well, because he had delayed the torture at least two years beyond the usual time, he could be sure that his treatment would be of the roughest.

Now he was entering the medicine lodge, making the proper ceremonial gestures, aware of the customary trappings of the rite. He looked at the gaudy center-pole; at the two naked Indian lads who already were tied to it by long thongs. Dancing, chanting loud prayers, from time to time they wrenched back their weight in an effort to tear out of their flesh the ropes that had been tied into their pectoral muscles. For the more quickly a man freed himself, the greater his honor, the more perfect his prayer, the more certain the strength of his resolution.

Not far away, Running Elk was now at work with two more candidates; and the blood which ran down the scrawny arms of the medicine man dripped steadily from his elbows. One glance showed thus much of the picture to Red Hawk. After that, with black mist spinning before his eyes, and with sagging knees, he looked down at the paint which Spotted Antelope was putting on him. There was a band of red, half an inch wide, painted around the body just above the hips, and another around his right arm just below the elbow. On his breast appeared a sun, with red rays running from it to the hips and shoulders. His forearms and legs were now being reddened, then the trunk would be blackened except where the other designs had been drawn.

The heart of Red Hawk was soothed by these lavish adornings; this magic made it impossible for him to fail in the ordeal. Red Hawk knew of

but one Cheyenne who had blenched under the torture. That unfortunate was literally a nameless creature, never to be mentioned, never to be called by the crier to a feast or a ceremony, never taken on the warpath, never admitted to the medicine lodge.

The painting had ended.

THE tall form of Standing Bull came to his friend and took his hand.

"Look on your own blood," said Standing Bull, "as though you looked upon the blood of your enemy. Do you think that the spirits can fail to see? As the blood runs from you, the beat of your feet will be on their breasts, and their ears will be opened as you pray to them for glory for scalps, and for many coups."

He stepped closer and murmured, "Breathe deeply; look high. Think of your spirit as of the mountains, and of your flesh as the grass that dies on them every year. I shall pray for you, brother."

It seemed to Red Hawk that he was smiling in answer, and murmuring thanks; then he found that his father had led him close to Running Elk and had retired. He was alone. His knees shuddered. Was it the smoke that made him choke?

He saw, in front of Running Elk, a lad of fourteen whose boy-name was Leaping Frog. He was a half-deformed, stunted youngster with very wide shoulders and a meager, starved body. The bony roundness of his face had given him the important half of his name. Now, as Running Elk laid hold of the right breast of the boy with thumb and finger, pulling out the loose skin, the Frog caught the glance of Red Hawk and pointed into his own eyes, smiling an invitation to watch

closely and see if even the flicker of a lid gave token of the pain he was about to endure.

Running Antelope slashed quickly on the right and on the left of the flesh which he held. Blood spurted, but as Red Hawk stared into the eyes of Leaping Frog, they smiled calmly back at him while the medicine man drove the knife through between the cuts. With two fingers the old man stretched out the band of loosened flesh, carelessly, like one handling dead meat, so that he could easily pass under the loop the end of a strong rawhide thong which he now tied, drawing the knot up hard. Still Leaping Frog continued to smile, and Red Hawk turned his dizzy eyes away.

In Red Hawk's ears ran the wild chant of White Wolf, one of those already tied to the center-pole. He was not more than fifteen, but already he had the height of a man, and now he was throwing back his weight against the thong that tied him by his bleeding muscles. A frenzy had come on him.

At the side of the lodge a number of warriors hideously painted were beating drums and singing a chant; but the yelling voice of White Wolf soared over all other sound as he shouted:

'Underground Listeners, hear me and drink my blood; I am giving it to you. I am White Wolf. I shall find many buffalo—I shall count many coups—I see my days all full of green and sunshine! I take Pawnee hair in my left hand, and I cut the scalp! So—so—so!'

He flung himself back against the rawhide with such force that the thong tore through on the right side with an audible sound, and Red Hawk saw the crimson fly in a spray. The tattered ends of the flesh hung down on White Wolf's breast, but he went on capering

and yelling in louder exultation than before. On the dim margin of his mind, Red Hawk was aware that the braves were standing up to look at this wild young hero, to applaud him, to point him out to one another.

A HAND grasped Red Hawk's own right breast. He looked down and saw the bloodstained hand of Running Elk. Even the eyes of the terrible old man seemed to be washed in blood.

"Wait!" said Red Hawk, gasping. "There is someone else to come before me. There is Leaping Frog to finish."

"Ah—dog!" said Running Elk. "It is true that Sweet Medicine flew over you; but it was his shadow that he trailed over your spirit.—Hear me, son of Spotted Antelope!"

He raised his voice suddenly, so that it ran through the whole of the Medicine Lodge and brought upon Red Hawk a dreadful battery of eyes. The drumming ceased, or fell to a murmur that was fainter than Red Hawk's thundering heart. Even the dancers around the center-pole of the lodge, even White Wolf, stood still, frozen with dread lest a frightful disgrace now fall upon the tribe.

"Do you give yourself freely?" shouted Running Elk. "Do you give your body and your blood freely to the knife?"

The words began to ring back and forth through the mind of Red Hawk like windy echoes that fly down the narrowness of a ravine. He parted his lips, and thought that he had said "Yes!" But the blood-dripping hand of Running Elk was still held high in suspense.

Then a faint voice drifting across the air touched Red Hawk's ears, for it was saying: "Strength! Give him

strength! I offer six good horses—I sacrifice a beaded shirt and a new rifle—"

That was Spotted Antelope, praying for more than the worth of his soul.

"Answer!" thundered Running Elk.

Red Hawk's head dropped; his knees sank under him and the knife of Running Elk cut the air just before his face.

"Go out of the lodge!" cried the infuriated medicine man. "It is forever closed to you. I see the face of a man and the heart of a dog. Sweet Medicine has breathed darkness over you; your name is forgotten in my ears!"

The drums, suddenly, began to beat; the dancers moved again around the center-pole, shouting their prayers; but what Red Hawk heard as he turned towards the entrance was a cry of grief, short and sharp, wrung from the heart of an old man. He saw the dark sweep of the buffalo robe as it was flung over the head of Spotted Antelope.

The keepers of the entrance stood back, opening the way to the young man, their eyes on the ground. He stepped out into the blinding brightness of the morning; and shrilling in his ears, darkening his brain as the sun was darkening his eyes, he heard the outcry of the children and the women as they realized that the tribe had lost a warrior and gained a lasting shame. He went on rapidly, his head fallen.

Once again he heard lifted a single voice of woe. He knew that that was the cry of Bitter Root, his foster-mother.

The eyes of the world were killing him, it seemed, and he began to run. A dog seemed to think it a game, and bounded at his heels, frolicking about

him. He came to his father's lodge, flung open the entrance, and hurled himself on the ground. He bit at the dirt with his teeth; he beat upon it with his hands. Great sobs began to work in his body, swelling his breast, thrusting into his throat; but not a sound could reach his lips.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DEAD SON.

A STEP sounded and paused beside him. Someone crouched by his body. A hand lay on his shoulder, and the voice of Standing Bull said:

"It is I, brother!"

That last word pierced Red Hawk's heart. He groaned:

"I am no longer your brother. I pour shame on all who are near me; I pour it out as the night pours darkness."

"Oh, my friend," said the warrior, "the hand that strikes you, strikes me. The blow that hangs over you, hangs over me.—The flesh is farther from the bone than you are from my heart."

Such grief came over Red Hawk, such agony worked in his body, that he wondered why the sobbing could not reach his mouth or why the tears did not rush into his eyes. He lay still, with his fingers buried in his hair.

A woman's voice of lament came out of the distance, approached them, swelled suddenly through the lodge as Bitter Root entered and flung herself down by the fire. She had already torn off her clothes until she was naked to the waist. Now, with a long skinning knife, she chopped her gray hair short; she began to gash her legs, her arms, her breast, snatching up ashes from the edge of the fire and pouring them

over her head. They fell down on her body, clotting the blood; they sifted into the fat folds of her stomach. And all the time she rocked herself back and forth with a double cry of monotonous lament.

Red Hawk got to his hands and knees and crawled to her. He held out his arms in supplication. He found his voice, to speak, but her eyes were filled with madness and unknowing.

Spotted Antelope entered, sat on the ground, and covered his head with his robe.

Then Standing Bull touched the shoulder of his friend once more. "Come!" he said.

Red Hawk stood up and followed the brave out of the lodge. In the distance he could hear the yelling of the women and children as some one of the martyred sufferers from the medicine lodge was dragged behind the heels of a running horse around and around the enclosure.

"I must die," said Red Hawk. "There is no more life for me. I cannot crouch among the women. I cannot carry burdens and chop wood and build fires and cook like a squaw. I must die!"

"This is only one day, and even this day has not ended," said Standing Bull. "Here is the lodge of Lazy Wolf. Ask him what you should do.—The girl is weeping. Do you hear?"

"She knows that I am a coward. Last night when she saw me I was almost a man. Now I am nothing! How can I go inside?"

At that moment the entrance flap was pushed back by Lazy Wolf. He was wearing his spectacles, so that his round, hairy face looked more than ever owlish; and he had between his teeth one of the short-stemmed pipes that white men use.

He stood aside and waved them in. Red Hawk entered the lodge, white and brilliant with the strong morning light of the sun. Blue Bird, throwing a light deerskin over her head, rose from a willow bed and slipped out through the entrance, shrouded and bowed like an old woman. But the face of Lazy Wolf was calm, as he sat down with his guests.

STANDING BULL took out a pipe, filled and lighted it with ceremony, blew smoke to the ground, to the Listeners Above, to the four quarters of the world.

"Let all the world of men and spirits know that this man is still my brother!" he said, and passed the pipe to Lazy Wolf.

The older of the two white men smiled as he puffed in a similar ceremonious manner. "My lad," said he, "let the spirits and all the men of the world know that I, also, am still your friend. And why not? No white man with his wits about him would go through the butchery of the medicine lodge. I haven't the stomach to look at the thing, to say nothing of enduring it. Your heart is not as red as you think, my son. However, it's true that life from now on will be hell for you in this camp—for a time, at least. The thing for you to do is to take a horse and ride across the hills and across the plains until you come to some town of the whites. They'll never think a whit less of you because you've not collected a set of scars."

"Leave my people!" cried Red Hawk. "If I leave them, it will mean a death in every day of my life. When the sun rises, it will find me among the whites, who are weak and foolish; who lie and cheat; who cannot endure the wind and the sun and the cold;

who murder the Cheyennes with tricks and cunning and black evil—and who do not know anything great or good!"

"They make the rifles which the Cheyennes shoot with," said Lazy Wolf, calmly, "and the knives which the Indians use, the blankets they want, the bright cloth, the beads, the axes and hatchets. They bring the tea and the sugar. Except for his horses and robes, what is the wealth of a Cheyenne except the things that the traders bring to him from the whites?"

"The work of squaws!" said Red Hawk. He raised his head and one hand, in a fine gesture of disdain. "They are a people without strength. Their eyes are pale. Their ugly faces and bodies are the color of the bellies of fish. Ah, Lazy Wolf, why do you tell me to go among them? Why should I not die quickly among my people rather than go among the strangers like them?"

Lazy Wolf turned to the warrior. "Talk to him," he said, briefly.

Standing Bull nodded. He stood up by the center-pole, gathered his robe about him, blew from his pipe a puff of smoke towards the sky.

"I have no years," he said. "I have not sat among the old men and heard their wisdom. I can only say to my brother that nothing but the strong sun keeps his skin dark, and that since his blood is white, perhaps he will be happy among the white men. I shall follow you as far as you go, and never leave you till you have reached a white camp. And once I have learned the trail to your new people, nothing but death can keep me from coming in a summer, or over the snow, to look into the face of my brother."

Red Hawk bowed his head.

"That," said Lazy Wolf, "is a very

true, sensible and knowing sort of speech. Standing Bull, you are a fellow of promise. You have a brain—with a tongue hitched to it—and I want to see you in my tepee more often.—Now then, Red Hawk, make up your mind. Are you going to stay on like a dog in the Cheyenne camp? Are you going to cut your throat like a fool and turn yourself into carrion for the buzzards to eat? Or are you going back to *your own people*?"

RED HAWK caught the hand of Lazy Wolf with a sudden gesture. "Tell me!" he said. "And you, Standing Bull, tell me. Could I ever return?"

"You could," said Lazy Wolf instantly.

"There are some among us who will always be waiting," said Standing Bull.

Red Hawk felt that something in him was dying; he knew a sorrow so great that his heart grew small under the weight of it. So he sat in silence, feeling now and again the glance of Lazy Wolf, that found him through the pipe-smoke.

At last the host said, "Now is the time to go, while all the rest are yet at the blood sacrifice. Get your best horse."

Red Hawk rose like a man in a dream, saddled a tough little gray stallion, which was his best horse, and returned to the tepee of Lazy Wolf. Standing Bull, with a saddled pony, was already waiting for him.

Then from the medicine lodge he saw the great war chief of the tribe come suddenly towards them, striding rapidly. There was hardly a red Indian of the plains more famous than Dull Hatchet, and now that he was dressed in full regalia for the cere-

mony of the medicine lodge he seemed to Red Hawk the most magnificent of figures.

His shirt, of the skin of two mountain sheep, worked with stained porcupine quills and painted with memories of his battles, flowed down to a deep fringe as low as his knees. His leggings were banded with more quill-work, and were fringed so that the border flowed down to the long tufts of buffalo beard attached to the heels of his beaded moccasins.

The war chief's imposing headdress of stained eagle-feathers swept from his head and trailed on the ground behind him, and at least a score of those feathers were tied at the tips with the hairs that were the sign of so many grand coups.

That headdress alone overwhelmed the eye and the mind of Red Hawk; but everything about the person of Dull Hatchet was extraordinary, from the necklace of a hundred grizzly bear claws to the tassels of ermine tails that hung from a hundred places. The shield on his arm was a wonder of cunningly painted bull's-hide, with a boss of skunk fur for an edge, fringed with eagle quills and the bright little hoofs of antelope. It was human blood that had been allowed to dry in layer on layer at the base of the steel on his lance, which was sharpened only at the point.

There were other details which enchanted the eye of Red Hawk to such a degree that in the glory of his war chief he almost forgot his disgrace. He brooded on the stern face of the hero, which was gashed across one cheek by a deep scar. There were plenty of other battle marks on the body of the old warrior; but, strange to say, this mark which helped to make him so terrible of aspect was the result

of a bullet fired at him by a woman. How weak his medicine must have been on that day, thought Red Hawk!

THEN he heard Dull Hatchet saying, grimly:

"One good deed is not enough to fill a life. Brave men have been forgotten, Standing Bull. And a brave is known not by the wife we find in his tepee, but by the friends who pass through the entrance flap. Standing Bull, you are looked for in the medicine lodge. The young men turn toward your place and their eyes are empty. The old men look vainly around them.—Return!"

He half turned as he said this, pointing his lance toward the distant lodge. But to the amazement of Red Hawk, his friend made not the least move to obey his war leader! Such a thing was unheard of.

A war chief of the Cheyennes, it is true, seldom gives commands when he is in camp; but once his voice is lifted, it is hardly second in authority to that of the supreme chief, or the head medicine man and wizard of the tribe.

Still young Standing Bull had not moved, though Red Hawk was gasping, "Go!—Go quickly! I am nothing, brother!—Go quickly before he is angry!"

It was plain that Standing Bull was in the greatest of anguish, for nothing could be a larger handicap to the career of a rising young brave than hostility on the part of his war chief. Honorable missions would be withheld from him, and his name would be omitted from important war-parties. With a gesture, the chief was able to sweep almost any brave into the deepest obscurity.

The command had been given and it would not be repeated; the face of

the great leader was already darkened before Standing Bull managed to say:

"You have been a father to me on the war trail; you have been a shield to turn bullets from me; and you have been a knife in my hand. But I have heard old men say that a friend is more than a breath in the nostrils."

The delay might have prepared the chief in part; nevertheless Dull Hatchet was shocked by these last words. The long lance shuddered in his grasp as he turned gradually; then the blood rushed into his face and seemed to stain his eyes as they kept their savage hold on Standing Bull to the last instant.

When the back of the war leader had been turned, Red Hawk caught the arm of his friend and shook it. "Go after him!" he whispered. "Walk at his side.—Quickly!—Tell him that a darkness fell over your mind, and that now you see clearly again. Go back with him or your life will be sad; and whenever you think of me you will groan and cover your head."

HE finished the last words in a weak voice, for already Standing Bull was drawing himself up, composing his face, gathering his strength in quietness as an Indian will do when his mind is irrevocably fixed on some dangerous goal.

Lazy Wolf, who stood behind them, said calmly, "Standing Bull, if you're riding with him, do you know the shortest way to one of the camps of the white men?"

"No," said the brave.

Lazy Wolf sat on his heels, and in Indian fashion he drew a trail-map on the ground, describing the marks as he made them.

Here he indicated a lone tree, there a flat-headed mesa, now an empty

draw, then a river which could be forded at a certain place. And as he made the design, Standing Bull, watching intently, copied it with his own finger in the dust. He would not forget. Cheyennes have traveled safely over a thousand miles of unknown country with no better guidance.

"And here," concluded Lazy Wolf, "you come to the Witherell Creek. Follow down it until you reach the hills, and inside the hills you'll come to the town of Witherell itself."

He stood up and took the hand of Red Hawk.

"When at last you come to your own white people," he said, "remember that although they're new to you, you can learn to taste life as they taste it. Be quiet. Use your eyes. Then a great many things will come to you easily that you could never win by fighting."

He held Red Hawk's hand as they walked to the edge of the village, and even went with them for a few paces beyond the outmost circle of lodges. Then he stopped.

That stopping wrenched at the heart of Red Hawk. "I must go back," he said, breathing deep and seeming to get no life or strength out of the air. "I must go back to say farewell, briefly, to my father and mother."

"Your mother is still howling and your father has blinded himself," answered Lazy Wolf. "I'll tell them that you've gone, and say why you didn't wait to speak to them. I'll give them farewell gifts, also. Go quickly—good-by, Red Hawk!"

Lazy Wolf turned away, with this final remark, and marched straight back among the lodges. Once he hesitated; then continued on his way.

Red Hawk groaned, "It is true.—They no longer have a son. In their

lodge I am dead. To-morrow I shall have been a ghost for a hundred years."

CHAPTER VII.

THE GHOSTS OF MEMORY.

THREE things of importance, never to be forgotten, were seen by Red Hawk on the way to the town of Witherell from the Black Hills. First, as he rode with Standing Bull down the narrow ravine of the first stream that watered the camp, he looked up by chance and saw what seemed to him, at first, a white rock on the verge of the bluff, high above him.

But rocks cannot move, and after a moment he realized that it was the Blue Bird in the shining newness of her doeskin dress.

He stared at her until he saw her make a gesture with both hands; then he dropped his head and galloped the gray stallion swiftly down the ravine, far out of sight of the girl. Yet afterwards she remained in his mind so clearly that often he wished he had last seen her in shadow rather than in sunshine, so that she would not gleam so in his memory, coming to him out of a distance.

On the third day as they voyaged over the northern plains a herd of wild horses, smaller than grains of dust on the palm of that gigantic hand, moved out of the eastern horizon and poured at a gallop closer and closer until Red Hawk saw a thing that glistened like the sharpened point of a lance.

He halted his gray stallion. He threw up his arms and shouted, "Look, Standing Bull! It is the White Horse! It is the White Horse!"

Standing Bull drew close to him.

They leaned from their saddles a little towards one another. The greatness of their excitement surrounded them like fear.

The herd swept nearer, still resembling a dark lance head with a shining point, until at last they had a nearer view of the White Horse than ever a Cheyenne had had. They were close enough to see the mark of darkness between the eyes, and how all four legs were stockinged at least fetlock high with black silk. All the rest of him was purest white.

To the startled eye of Red Hawk he seemed burnished silver. Imagination stopped with the beauty of his body and his stride. The herd that followed seemed mere dust that blew at his heels.

He came right on at them, as though he led home a charge; but angling suddenly, he went off at full gallop, his mane and tail blown like feathers by his speed. They watched him marshal his little host away, rounding to the rear of the herd to drive up the lag-guards with the ringing bugle call of his neigh. And afterwards the two men looked for a long time on one another with eyes made dull by the pain of a hopeless desire.

The White Horse was new to fame. He had led herds across the plains and up into the mountain valleys for only two seasons. But already Comanches in the south, Pawnees and Blackfeet to the west, the Dakotas to the north, and the riders of the Cheyennes had all melted away the best of their horse-flesh in the vain effort to catch the stallion.

That was why the two young Cheyennes sat their saddles quietly and made no effort now to pursue. Then Standing Bull lifted a hand towards the sky; and Red Hawk knew

that he could name with ease the subject of the warrior's silent prayer.

THEY were less than a day from the end of their journey when they came to the third great milestone of the expedition. Riding down the bank of Witherell Creek, they came to the ruins of a sod house which many winters had beaten and melted into a sodden heap out of which only a few rotten poles were thrusting. More poles, sticking up through the grass, vaguely indicated what had once been a fenced inclosure. It was by no means an unusual sight, for the prairie was daubed here and there by the dim ruins of the houses of white settlers. This site, however, was more particularly marked by a large white stone, evidently quarried at a distance and brought here at the cost of a great effort, for it was far too ponderous for Red Hawk to budge, no matter how he strained at it.

He had dismounted because out of this obscure place something spoke to him. Standing Bull stood by with folded arms and watched. It was he, however, who called the attention of Red Hawk to what he called the "medicine pictures" on the face of that stone. Then Red Hawk, who had been taught elementary reading by Lazy Wolf, made out the chiseled letters, pointing them out with his fingers and gradually grouping them into the sound of syllables, until the words were complete.

"Kate Sabin lies here, killed by the murdering Cheyennes of Dull Hatchet."

Red Hawk sprang to his feet. "Wind Walker!" he cried.

The name made even Standing Bull leap aside as though to dodge a lance thrust from behind.

"Wind Walker!" repeated Red Hawk. "This is the grave of his squaw. This is where he buried the woman for whose sake he is still hunting the Cheyennes. For this is how they bury a squaw or a brave—in the dark and the wet and the cold of the earth, instead of leaving them wrapped on a platform where the sun can shine on them and the wind blow on them, with a good horse killed beneath, so that its ghost can still carry the ghost of the master.—But here the woman lies!"

He fell into such a long pause that his friend at last said gently, "What is rising in you? Your throat works.—Shall we sing a chant?"

Gradually Red Hawk extended his left arm.

"There should be corn-land yonder!" he said suddenly.

STANDING BULL went instantly to the indicated place.

"There is nothing here," he said, trailing his moccasins over the ground to feel the face of it through the grass. "Ha!—Now I find some small bumps—now others. And in rows, do you see?—Yes, this must have been corn-land, long ago."

He came back and looked into the dreamy face of Red Hawk. "This is a strange thing, brother!" he said in an awed voice. "When your eyes look inside of you, what do they see?"

"Nothing!" said Red Hawk. "Only shadows and dimly moving things.—But I can hear something."

"What do you hear?" asked the warrior.

"A voice that says a thing which has no meaning. Besides, it is a woman's voice!—Standing Bull, is it the voice of the buried squaw?—It is sounding deeply, inside me."

"What is the sound?"

"There is no meaning to it," said Red Hawk. "But she calls in me—'Rusty.'"

"That is a word in the speech of the white men. It is not Cheyenne," suggested Standing Bull.

"It is a word of the whites," agreed Red Hawk.

"This is a dangerous thing," said Standing Bull, very gravely. "When ghosts speak out of the ground, old men say that death is near to us."

"Ride on down the creek.—I must stay here for a little time," answered Red Hawk. "Either this inside me is the voice of a ghost, or the ghost of a memory, and how could I remember a thing which has never been?—If it is a ghost, it is a friendly one."

"Why do you say so?" asked Standing Bull.

Red Hawk answered, "Because I feel now a sorrowful happiness—like that which I feel when I think of the lodge of my father, now that I am far away from it. It is happiness to remember, and it is grief to know that it is lost to me. It seems to me that I am eating sorrow, and drinking it—till I am full of grief.—Ride down the creek, my brother. Leave me alone here, and I shall follow soon."

But he did not follow quickly, according to his promise. Instead, he remained for long hours, wrapped in his buffalo robe, seated cross-legged beside the white stone of the grave. Sometimes he put out his hand and touched it, hot as it was with the sun; and it seemed to him like the touch of flesh. But all the while, images were rising up in his mind like bubbles in a dark fountain, so that he could never see their faces. Headless ghosts at last he stood up and climbed again into the saddle.

THE WHITE INDIAN

Standing Bull asked no questions, hollow, it seemed to Red Hawk that for he saw in the face of his friend a thing that was beyond speech. he was looking through dim water, at strange spots of sunlight on the bottom of a stream. There was no moon.

It was because of this delay that they did not pass through the hills into view of Witherell until the sunset had dwindled to a smudge. They stood in silence so long that he could mark the up-drift of the stars above the eastern hills.

As they paused in the dark throat of the little valley and looked down on the lights of the town that lay in the Standing Bull said, "I go back to the tribe now; and you go forward to your people. I shall come again."

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.



Airplane Drops House from Skies

WHEN Arthur Judd, chief forester of the Territory of Hawaii, recently decided to build an overnight camp in the Kaipapau Forest Reserve on the island of Oahu for the use of forest rangers he was confronted by a big problem. The site selected was on the summit of the Koolau Range, about four miles as the crow flies from the nearest village, Haulua. But these four miles are twice that many hours of hard, dangerous mountain climbing along high steep cliffs, stung by rains and buffeted by the strong northeast trade winds that blow almost unceasingly here.

The mountain trail winds along ground eroded and softened by the rains and is so steep and treacherous that each step must be guarded lest the ground give way beneath the traveler and hurl him into the depths of the chasm below. Not even sure-footed pack mules can traverse that wild, dangerous mountain trail. Hence the transportation of the 1,200 pounds of sheet iron, lumber and nails necessary for the construction of the one-room hut-camp atop Koolau Range presented a major problem to Mr. Judd.

In his quest for aid he turned to the U. S. Army Air Corps, and Uncle Sam's birdmen came through with the answer. A bombing plane was placed at the chief forester's disposal. Master Sergeant Samuel J. Davis, enlisted pilot of the 23rd Bombardment Squadron, looked the awkward situation over, making a flight over the ground about Haulua.

Davis then had the building materials put up into three bundles, each weighing approximately 400 pounds. Forest rangers planted themselves upon the site selected for the overnight camp, and placed marking panels in a clearing on the summit. An external bomb rack was fitted into the plane and a system of slings devised whereby the three bundles could be suspended from the bomb rack.

The soldier pilot then flew over the camp-site on the summit, dropping the bundles almost at the feet of the forest rangers.

In less than six hours of flying the task which would have taken at least two weeks, at a grave risk to life and limb, was successfully accomplished.

Herbert E. Smith.

Loot

By ROBERT CARSE

Author of "The Ship," "The Bugle Calls," etc.

"Some guys stay crooked, and some don't," said Lieutenant Bertrin of the Legion, who was wanted on a charge of robbery and murder

Novelette—Complete

CHAPTER I.

GOVERNMENT DETECTIVE.

SLOWLY, Bertrin closed the little khaki-colored Bible and dropped it by his side. Across the grave from him, and to the right of the stiff file of the burial detail, the bugler raised his instrument for "Taps." The last note quavered up and dropped off into silence. Bertrin's eyes swung along the line of rifles held unmovingly at the "Present," then at the brown, somber faces behind them.

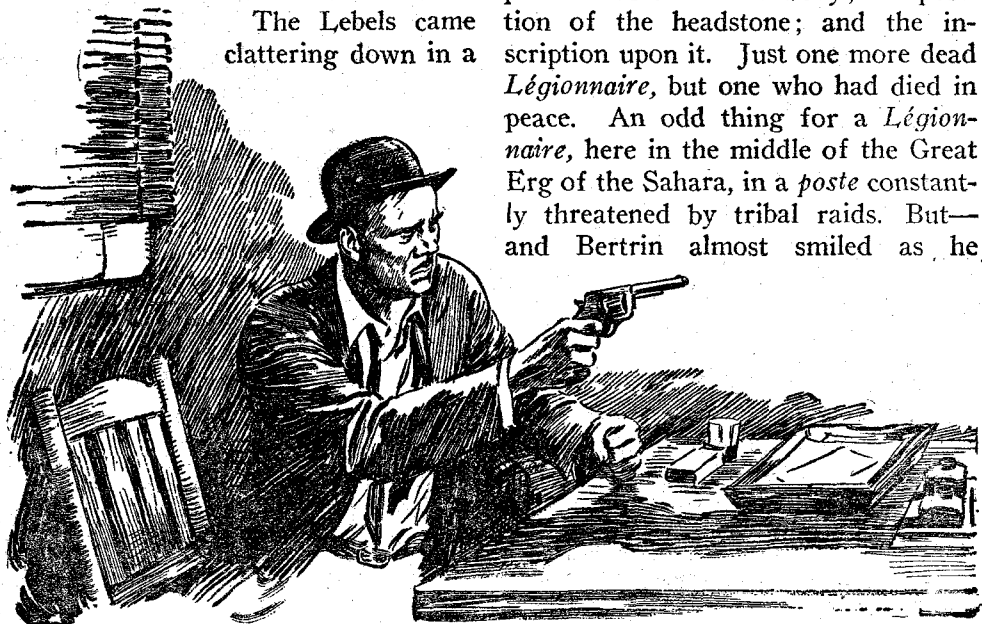
"Order—arms!"

The Lebels came clattering down in a

gleam of dark wood and steel. "Detail—dismissed!"

At a sort of jogging trot the men of the detail broke from their formation and started across the blazing white expanse of the little *poste* compound for the shadows and coolness of the barracks-room.

With a weary motion of his head, Bertrin brought his eyes back from them to the grave and the simple headstone there. It was all correct, he thought dully; all according to regulations. The depth of the grave; the position of the man's body; the position of the headstone; and the inscription upon it. Just one more dead *Légionnaire*, but one who had died in peace. An odd thing for a *Légionnaire*, here in the middle of the Great Erg of the Sahara, in a *poste* constantly threatened by tribal raids. But—and Bertrin almost smiled as he,



"You're the man who pulled that job in Hyeres," Olard accused

thought this—every man's luck was different. It was this man's to be poisoned by a bad bottle of wine he had purchased in some native *café* hundreds of miles to the north and carried in here in his pack.

Bertrin turned, idly watching the black slant of his shadow before him on the sand, and starting toward his own little room at the far side of the compound. Then boots clattered behind him, on the steps leading down from the stone bastion, and he looked back over his shoulder.

One of the sentries stood there, half way down the steps, his bayoneted rifle brought to the salute. "*Pardon, mon lieutenant.*"

"Yes?" He squinted his tired eyes as he glanced up into the fierce sunlight to see the man. "What now?"

"There is a dust cloud on the horizon, to the south of that big dune, lieutenant."

"Coming this way, then?"

"Yes, lieutenant. And coming fast."

"Camels?"

"I am not sure."

"Zut!" One corner of Bertrin's mouth pulled back. "It might be elephants, for all of you!—Stand back!"

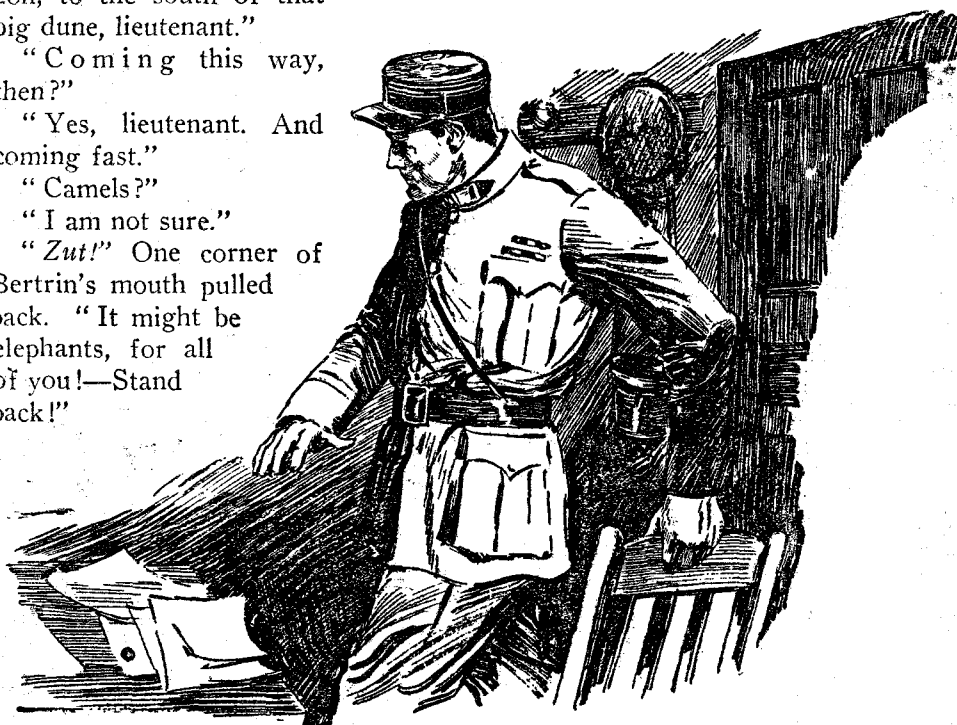
With quick and impatient strides he ran up past the man, went to the corner of the northern bastion, looked out through the shimmering lake of heat lying on the desert. Then he stared around, at the sentry who had followed.

"You see it now? It is an armored car—an army machine. See the steam from the radiator? And the little pennants, at the corners of the turret?"

"Yes, lieutenant."

"Good. And next time, remember that camels cannot run that fast—whether you can clearly see them or not. Now, go below and open the gate. Tell the sergeant to fall in the men. Move, you!"

THE *poste* lay high up on a long, steep slope of soft sand and treacherous shale. But the powerful machine came roaring up



Bertrin jumped to his feet in surprise

through that without a halt, almost without slacking speed.

"He's in a hurry, that guy," muttered Bertrin, starting down the steps to the gate to greet his visitors. "If it's the colonel, he'll be baked alive—and he'll drink up my last bottle of brandy and the rest of the beer!"

Where he stood, close inside the gate, the sergeant had just cracked an order at the smartly aligned detail, and the rifles flashed up as Bertrin strode through. The armored car had stopped under the walls, at the end of the zig-zag lane of rusted barbed wire there. Loud snapping and crackling sounds came from the overheated motor and radiator; there was a strong smell of burned paint, oil, rubber and hot metal. Bertrin wrinkled his nostrils as he stood waiting for the door in the rear to open and the occupants to come forth.

The first man out staggered with exhaustion, and nearly fell. He was small; his face was purple with congested blood; his eyes were inflamed with sweat and heat. His dark civilian suit clung against his body, and there were large stains of perspiration upon the brim and crown of the derby hat he held in one hand. He blinked at Bertrin, silent and erect within a few paces of him.

"*Bonjour*," he said in a choked voice. "The lieutenant in command of the *poste*, isn't it? Good—fine. Let me introduce myself: Olard, agent of the *Sûreté Générale*. My papers, I'll show them to you inside, if you wish.—But first, let me get that driver out of there. Ah—he comes alone."

The driver came stumbling, nearly falling on his face as he slid down through the door at the rear of the car. He was a tall and gangling man,

dressed in the faded khaki of the Legion, a uniform that was crumpled and stained with sweat and oil. His *képi* was jammed far back upon his lumpy, closely shaven skull. Seeing Bertrin and the gold upon Bertrin's sleeves and cap, he made a semblance of coming to attention and saluting.

Bertrin returned the salute mechanically, his eyes and thoughts upon the man who declared himself an agent of the national detective bureau. "You seem a bit out of your way, M'sieur Olard. Where are you in from?"

The man who had introduced himself as Olard had now tilted his derby brim over his eyes as protection against the sun. It cast a shadow upon his face and obscured the features, but even then Bertrin had the impression that the other had briefly smiled.

"'Out of my way' is right!—Too far to suit me an awful lot. Reggan was the last stop, as I remember it. Since then we've seen nothing but sand—and then more sand. Excuse me, but maybe the lieutenant could find a dying man a drink? This fellow can bring in my bags."

"Yes." Bertrin made a short indicative gesture with one hand, waited until the other had stepped ahead of him through the gate. "Now turn to your right; those are my quarters over there . . ."

CHAPTER II.

ACCUSATIONS.

OLARD sat with his jacket wide, collar loosened, his tie discarded. Behind him, on a chair at the corner of Bertrin's desk, was his small traveling bag and a black official-looking briefcase. Before him was a glass of brandy and one of Bertrin's

last boxes of Macedonian cigarettes. The glass was empty, as was the cigarette box; Olard had just finished both. Bertrin was aware of that fact as he turned back from adjusting the window blind.

He looked over at his guest. "A little unusual, isn't it, to send a man like you out here?"

"Yes." Olard's fingers played for an instant across the stubby moustache above his full, heavy lips. "Several times, this last day or so, I've even found far more violent words than that for it."

Bertrin did not smile at that; and with a sudden movement Olard reached behind him and brought onto his knees his briefcase. He opened the clasps one by one, cast back the flap, then pulled forth a thin sheaf of papers contained in an oilcloth envelope.

"My identification and orders," he said in a quiet voice, holding them out.

"Thank you." Bertrin read in silence, his expression never changing. As he handed them back, "So you're out looking for an American—a murderer and thief who once served under the alias of Brown in the Foreign Legion. This is a warrant for him?"

"That's it." Olard's eyes had steadied on the lieutenant's deeply lined and tanned face. "All the documents are right there, if you wish to read them. You've just read the first two. Brown was his name, and he did serve two enlistments in the Legion. Then, according to our information, at the end of his second hitch he got fed up with service in the foreign regiments, and paid out, in Marseilles. He pulled this robbery and murder job about three months after that, in one of the little resort towns on the Riviera.

2 A—9

"Then, from what we're given to believe, he went back into the Legion again, under another name. That's an old trick; lots of smart crooks have done it before, and it's worked. To fully identify a man in the Legion—to come out here into the Sahara, or to Madagascar, Syria or Indo-China—is a job the inspectors in Paris usually don't like to tackle. But they've got too much evidence against Brown to disregard his case."

"You're pretty sure of your man?"

Bertrin asked that while he lit a cigarette, and Olard closely watched the act. The lieutenant's hands were perfectly steady.

Olard fingered his moustache again. "Yes, we're pretty certain of him. That, of course, is why I'm here."

"You think he's here—in this *poste*?" Bertrin's gray, level eyes lifted momentarily.

"Yes, unless our information and the records at Sidi-bel-Abbes are wholly wrong. . . . It was a laugh to me all the way coming in, for in Reggan I heard about the pile of gold and ivory you've got stored away here in this *poste* now, and I could see that crook, Brown, laying his plans to get his hands on that."

A WORD that was very much a curse came jerkily from Bertrin.

"Not much chance of that! The colonel's column brought that in last month; it's stuff from a Touareg caravan that a big *rezzia* of the R'Gerbait plucked off, over on the edge of the Hoggar country. The R'Gerbait got cocky, having beaten the Touareg, and tackled the colonel and the Legion; so the colonel kicked the spots off them, and took their gold and ivory for his pains . . .

"The French government will get it now, of course, and the colonel made pretty certain of that, even though he had to leave it here last month and take his column out to go and help the mobile group up beyond Tdala. He buried it four feet deep, right beneath this floor here, and it would take a lot of men and a lot of digging to get it out . . . But, I'm still interested in this American, Brown. You say he's here, attached to this *poste*?"

"Yes." One of Olard's hands, his right, had dropped back, toward his hip, and the pocket there. For minutes, now, his eyes had not left the lieutenant's calmly intent face. "He's not only attached to this *poste*; he's in it, right now."

Bertrin made a small nodding movement with his head. "I suppose I would have found that out for myself, if I'd gone on and read the rest of your papers. We had a man—one of the radio operators—die on us last night here. He died of poisoned wine which he brought in here when this detachment took over the *poste*. It would be funny, wouldn't it, if he was your man? His name was Luchnarsky, and he said he was a Russian. He was a big fellow. Might have been an American, for all of me. We aren't very inquisitive, here in the foreign regiments, concerning a man's past."

"No." Olard moved his head, in turn. "I don't think it was any man named Luchnarsky. The man I'm after gave his nationality when he joined up in the Legion again, seven years ago, as being Belgian. He didn't stay a private, either; for he was a pretty smart guy. He became eligible for the noncom school at Sidi-bel-Abbes; got to be a sergeant; won a couple of medals and general order commendations in the fighting out here

in the *bled*; and they made him a lieutenant . . ."

There was a scraping sound; Bertrin was pushing back his chair and coming to his feet. His hands were upon the lower half of his Sam Browne belt. The knuckles stood out bluish white through the tan. His voice was low as he said:

"There's only one lieutenant here."

"That's right." The black, blunt revolver whipped suddenly from Olard's pocket into his hand. "And you're that only one, Bertrin—who once was Brown, and who pulled that job in Hyeres. Sorry, but it's so. But—sit down; I want to talk to you just a little longer."

"Thank you," said Bertrin in a slow, thick voice. He seemed very old, very tired, revealed when he dropped back into the chair again, a ray of the fading sun falling across his face.

Olard slowly turned the gun in his hand, looked down from it along the hard-packed dirt floor, bare except it was covered before the desk with strips of native matting. Then, darting his eyes toward the lieutenant's grayish face, he said:

"YOU say that that gold and ivory is right here, buried in this earth beneath our feet? *Eh, b'en!* You've not denied to me that you didn't pull a job of robbery and murder with some other mugs in Hyeres. Which naturally makes me, as an agent of the *Sûreté*, wonder a little as to whether that gold has been tampered with or not; whether, perhaps, it's still here.—I'm afraid, Brown—Bertrin—lieutenant, that I'll have to see that a couple of men come in here and dig up this floor. I'll have to make sure. You're a convicted thief and murderer in my eyes—and you know French law."

"Yes." Bertrin's lips were back from his teeth; the words came forth short-clipped. "I know a little bit about French law, and that a man is held guilty until he is proven innocent. But, I know a little bit about the Legion, too. Just enough to make me wonder why you came in here, like this, without bringing in my relief. Back in Reggan, and Colomb-Bechar, they know that the gold is here. They know that if I'm to go there is no man here of sufficient rank to take my place.—Just a minute, Olard! Give me a minute more! Your proof as to my identity and my crime is sufficient enough to have convinced the headquarters officers that it wouldn't be out of their way to send in a relief officer, for my job, along with you—if you were going to take me back as your prisoner. What's the answer to that?"

Olard's flat, small-featured face tilted back as he laughed. "You're all the same, you crooks!" he said in a choked voice. "When the cops get onto you and you see the prison bars looming up right ahead; you clutch at anything—any straw. This talk you have given me now is just that sort of thing. Why, before, you yourself said that all the groups are so busy that the colonel had to leave his prize of gold and ivory here and take his column north to help the Tdala mobile group.

"Legion officers aren't lying around free under every palm tree; Legion Headquarters isn't going to take another lieutenant off active duty and send him down here—hundreds of kilometers—to the last little *poste* in the desert. Not just because you're suspected of being a crook. No. But after I've made my personal identification, as I have now, I shall use your *poste* wireless set, and send a message

north confirming my arrest of you. Then I shall ask to have your relief sent down from Reggan. That answers your question pretty well, doesn't it, *mon lieutenant*?"

"Perhaps." The tone of Bertrin's voice was barely above a whisper; but he was leaning forward in his chair toward Olard, and there were distinct lines of cords visible on his throat, bunches of muscles prominent at the corners of his jaw. "But don't insult me any further with that pea-shooter of a revolver. Put it up! I'm still a fully commissioned senior lieutenant of the Legion here, despite you and your papers, and I remain so until I see a transcript of the receipted radiogram from headquarters, ordering my arrest by you. Only that absolves and relieves me from my duties here. Meanwhile, go easy; those men out there respect, obey and like me—and anyone of them would knock you over the dome and take that gun from you, at a word from me. Understood?"

Olard's lips met, compressed; Bertrin could see his grip tighten about the revolver butt. Then, however, he gave a barking laugh and dropped the revolver back into his pocket.

"'Understood'—yes, my lieutenant. But, that only begins matters. I shall send that radiogram with willingness, and at once. But—"

He stood up, went to the door, pulled aside the coarse curtain there, whistled shrilly through his fingers.

THE man who came loping across the compound and entered the room in answer to that whistle was the gangling, small-eyed driver of the armored car. He came to a clumsy halt inside the door, shoved his hand up to the brim of his *képi* in a shadowy salute.

"Be at ease, you!" Olard snapped at him. "You're a *Légionnaire*, but not from this *poste* here. So I want you as my witness—frankly, because the other men around this place are all under the lieutenant's thumb.—What's your name?"

"Vennel, Hans, *M'sieur*."

"All right, Vennel.—Listen. You know why you were ordered to drive me down here?"

Vennel's loose, colorless lips worked back and forth, and he gave a sidelong and somehow furtive glance at Bertrin, silent and motionless in his chair, before he answered:

"Yes, sir. That is, a pretty good idea. The captain up north told me that you were an agent of the *Sûreté*, and that you were searching out some crook in the Legion. So I guessed—"

"What?"

"Well, that probably.—You've been here with the lieutenant, the whole time since we've been in, so—"

Olard let forth a sharp curse. "Say what you want to say, man! I'm not one of these Legion slave-drivers! Anyhow, the lieutenant, here, is the man I'm after.—For robbery and murder. I've just accused him of his crime, and he's given me what might be readily called insubordinate answers. Now, I want no funny business pulled; I want this man to face justice, and not to blow his brains out or go over the wall into the *bled*, where I'd have to catch him all over again. But he insists that I send a radio north, confirming my identity, and his loss of rank and official arrest. I don't want to leave him for a minute, and as yet I can't rightly lock him up in a cell. So you'll send that message for me. You'll take it over to the operator, across the compound, and see that he sends it straight. Get me, Vennel?"

"Yes, sir. Fully."

"All right!"

Olard dropped back into his chair again, pulled an official blank from the top of his briefcase and a gold-mounted pen from his inside jacket pocket. The pen scratched noisily across the paper for several minutes. Then, holding the sheet up to dry, Olard stared at the big man in the doorway.

"At once, mind you.—And to be marked 'Official' and 'Urgent.' Here it is! And snap it up!"

Vennel nodded, mumbled an assent, and had his long legs pumping up and down in rapid motion before he was through the doorway.

Olard stared after him for a second, then back at Bertrin. "That'll take care of you, I guess, *mon lieutenant*."

"So?" Bertrin's lids had so narrowed across his eyeballs that only a dark, intense gleam came forth. "Do you know how long you'll have to wait for that answer to be relayed north, and the answer back? At least six or eight hours."

AS if it was an unconscious gesture so strong that he could not control it, Olard's right hand thrust down toward the gun in his side jacket pocket.

"I know all that!" he exclaimed impatiently. "But six hours or six days—it's all the same to me, if not to you. For you'll never get away again, mug. Not from me! . . . Now, there's just one other little question I've got to put to you: what's this about a man dying here, of poisoned wine?"

Bertrin's body was stiff, his voice harsh. "That's what I said—poisoned wine. There's the official record, turned in to me by my clerk. The

man's name was Luchnarsky, as I told you. A Russian. One of my two radio operators. He died in agony, last night, despite all that I or any other man in the *poste* could do for him.—Is it that you doubt that, too, M'sieur Olard; that you also doubt me?"

Olard was on his feet, near the door. He was smiling, very quietly. "A man like me *always* doubts a man like you, *mon lieutenant*—and with good reason. 'Poisoned wine'! That sounds a little silly, a little fantastic, to me. It's seldom that the *Sûreté* sends a man out here; and it would be a very good thing, perhaps, if I looked into that also, while I am here. Just to occupy those hours until we hear about you from the north. You will not deny me that small privilege, lieutenant? And you will order out a detail of men to help me exhume the body for examination?"

A low curse came from Bertrin then. He rose swiftly, his hands going out into a striking position. Then some deep, inner, cold command seemed to subdue his anger, for he nodded rather calmly and walked to the door, pulling his whistle from its resting place in his tunic pocket.

"Yes," he said levelly, having blown a clear call for his senior sergeant, "I don't see very well how I can deny you that hospitality, M'sieur Olard!"

CHAPTER III.

THE JOB AT HYERES.

THE sun had faded from the desert, and then from the sky. Darkness, wine-colored and rapid, had dropped down. A degree of coolness had come. Now a moon lay high against the sky, paling it, placing a wash of light upon the desert, the

poste and the shadow-rimmed compound. Where M'sieur Olard stood, beside the group of back-weary *Légionnaires* working at opening the grave, the moon's light was quite clear. Bertrin, standing in the doorway of his office beside Yvec, his gaunt, gray-headed senior sergeant, could even distinguish all of the features of the police agent's face.

Yvec, the old Swiss sergeant, stood with his *képi* pushed far over against one ear. His hands were in his trousers pockets. The blackened stub of a cheap native cigarette smoldered beneath his curving, huge moustache. He spoke to Bertrin without removing the cigarette; its tip bobbed up and down.

"A busy guy, that agent! No sleep, no food—not a wash, even—and he starts digging up graves."

He stopped there and looked aside, at Bertrin. The lieutenant's long, narrow face was nearly expressionless; only a small, fixed smile was gathered about his mouth and eyes. Yvec stirred one foot and then the other; he liked this man beside him a lot; had served with him too long not to. Through the worn cotton lining of his trouser leg, he scratched the rough skin of his thigh:

"Say, lieutenant, I'm not the guy for asking questions, but what in the name of a very dirty goat is that lad after?—What's it all about?—The armored car. And him. And that skinny guy he brings in with him, who calls himself a Legion driver. Then Rolbogar, the operator, putting a long 'urgent' on the air for Colomb-Bechar. Then this grave-digging stunt.—The Legion is the Legion, and some funny things happen, but . . ."

He cursed there, his voice puzzled, indistinct.

"Here." Bertrin was holding out

his cigarette case. "Have one of mine before you burn the end of your nose off, or explode that moustache.—Sure, you've served with me a long time, and you've known me a long time; and this may be the only chance you'll ever have to hear the truth."

Bertrin paused, briefly, his eyes ranging keenly and thoughtfully across the compound, along the flat, low line of familiar buildings, then up at the dark shapes of the sentries on the bastions, sharp silhouettes of movement against the moonlight. Lastly, his eyes came back to the face of the man at his side.

Yvec stood exactly as he had before, except that the new cigarette had replaced the dangerously short stub of the old one.

Bertrin drew in his breath almost like a man who is about to make a plunge into water that he knows is icy and dangerous.

"IT began a long while back, old-timer. When I was serving in the regiments under the name of Brown, and not Bertrin. I'd put in two hitches then, and I was a senior corporal, in the Sixteenth of the First. But there was a tough skipper in the Sixteenth then—some dirty 'theorist' who'd been spoiled for active Legion duty by a lot of stuff he'd studied at the *École de Guerre*. That guy all but ruined the company—and all but ruined me. He raised trouble right down the line.

"You know me, and you'll believe me. For no real reason at all, he busted me to a second class private, two weeks before my hitch was up. So, after that, I said, '*À bas, la Légion!*'—No more of it. I was through. . . . I went over to Marseilles, and I took my pay, and got

drunk. Good and drunk. Because really, you see, I liked the Legion. . . ."

"Yeah." Yvec spat, without removing the cigarette. "I know how that feels."

He was silent, watching Olard, and the men of the detail, now almost knee-deep in the reopened grave.

Slowly, Bertrin nodded, and his voice had a deeper note as he went on. "When I came off that drunk, I was broke—flat. It was winter time. And any guy who tells you it's warm in Marseilles in the winter is a dirty liar. For nights I slept out, dodging the *gendarmes* and trying to find work—when there wasn't even a decent job for a man who was a Frenchman—and with frost-bite in my fingers and toes. I was used to Africa; to the sun. It was too much for me. There was one job—as a bouncer in a tough joint down by the old port. It meant breaking the heads and arms of drunks; but I took it, and I met the gang there.—You understand, Yvec?"

Yvec grunted. "Sure, I understand! Do I look like a flower girl?"

Bertrin grinned. "The boss of the joint—my boss—was in with this gang," he went on. "He pulled me in. It was go in, or lose my job. I went. For the job they were going to pull was against a wealthy, outwardly respectable crook of a Russian; a man who had gouged a fortune out of the dockworkers in Marseilles. The sort of man any guy hates, when he's down, and desperate. The Russian had a big villa in Hyeres, down the coast from Marseilles. We were going to rob that, lift some of the Russian's silver, his jewels and *bibelots*—and no big loss to him, either. So, we went down from Marseilles, five of us, and we pulled the job.

"I stayed outside, beneath the wall.

I was the lookout, and I never saw what went on inside. When we got out, though, and started for Marseilles, one of the others—my boss in the *café*—loosened up and admitted he'd put a knife through the Russian's back while they were raiding his bedroom, just as the Russian woke up. . . ."

BERTRIN'S right hand came out from his side tunic pocket. He lifted it, so that Yvec could see the white scars across his knuckles.

"Those are the marks of that guy's teeth," he said quietly. "If he's still alive, he'll never forget the beating I gave him. One of the others tried to knife me then, but I gave him the old Legion present of a kick in the brisket, and came away from there.—I learned my lesson then; and there was just one place left for me to go—back into the Legion. That was eight years ago, and I came as Bertrin. Now this guy is here; he's after me on a charge of murder and robbery, for that old job in Hyeres."

"Huh!" The fringe of Yvec's moustache had begun to smolder, and he quietly spat forth the remaining quarter-inch of the cigarette. "I didn't think I liked that guy's looks, when I first saw him.—You going to let him take you?"

Bertrin raised one shoulder perhaps an inch. "Why not? How not?"

Yvec lifted his *képi* to scratch his ear rim. He slapped the *képi* back into place, almost with violence. "Even if you did go, you weren't the guy who did that job. You didn't even see the killing done."

Bertrin faintly laughed. "And what witnesses have I to prove that? What witnesses can this bird, Olard, or the State bring forth, to say I was there and did do it?"

A growling sound came from Yvec. He fingered the smoldered part of his moustache. His eyes were on Olard, crouching now, an electric lantern in one hand, over the stiff form of the corpse, just lifted from the grave.

"I don't like that guy, as I said before," said Yvec. "He's too busy for me.—What's he working over Luchnarsky's lump for now?—Yeah, and why is it that at chow this guy who calls himself a Legion driver—this bird Vennel—don't even know about borrowing a knife, fork, spoon, chow-tin and cup; don't know how to draw his ration in regular Legion style? Why is it, when I come by the radio room, Vennel and this guy Rolgobar, the operator, are talking together, with their heads almost knocking?—And then they stop, quick, when I step in the door?"

Bertrin turned slowly, so that he faced his senior sergeant. "What are you trying to prove, Yvec? What are you trying to get over to me?"

Yvec cracked a familiar and vehement Legion curse. "I don't quite know myself, yet. I'm not a very smart guy, or I wouldn't be here, I guess. But somehow this thing all looks a little cockeyed to me.—But listen, lieutenant. No more chin work, and no more guessing. I'll go over and get this mug, Vennel. I'll put the paw on him, and ask him a couple of questions his mother never asked him. Maybe he'll answer, or maybe I'll just give him a good sock in the snoot. Either way, I'll be pleased, though.—And you know, some guys are straight and some are crooked; some guys stay that way, and some don't. . . ."

His big, tattooed hand swept up and dragged the *képi* off. He looked thoughtfully into the lining of it for a moment before he went on speaking.

"Yes," he said, "and it's just come into my thick skull; I was turned over as a sergeant-instructor to the *Bat' d'Af'* one time, to drive some drill into those kids who are too crooked to serve their military duty with the nice little boys at home. I was a couple of years doing that, and during that time I got to know a mug who looked one great big lot like the mug on this guy, Olard. Just that—he was doing his service in the *Bat' d'Af'*. I'll bet all my pay-off on that. . . .

"Funny, kind of, for the coppers to take in a guy like him, huh? Well, I think so, anyhow. And you might ask him—here he comes now with Luchnarsky's lump being lugged behind him. He's a real friend of yours, that guy—just a buddy. I'll lay you another side bet that he ups and accuses you right now of murdering Luchnarsky. Yes, sir, you wait and you'll see!"

CHAPTER IV.

IDENTITY CONFIRMED.

WITH a movement of his dirt-soiled hand, Olard indicated a corner of the room. "Put it there," he grunted to the corporal, and three men who carried the sagging, canvas-wrapped body.

"But wait. Don't go yet. I'll want you a little while longer."

He looked over at Bertrin as he spoke, but the lieutenant was unmoving, his expression still one of rigid calm. A hiss came from Olard.

"Would you like to help me examine the corpse, lieutenant?"

"No, thank you." Bertrin smiled bleakly now. "You're the only trained and official investigator here; I'm only a soldier, you know."

Olard made no answer to that; he was stooping down, over the corpse, unbuttoning and stripping away the uniform.

Suddenly a small and satisfied cry came from him. He sprang up, his eyes gleaming, his teeth exposed in an animal-like grin. His voice was hoarse with emotion when he let the words rush out:

"I thought so! I expected so, all along! A small razor slash, right behind the left ear! So!—And this poisoned wine, lieutenant—you have it?"

Bertrin moved his eyes in a slow glance toward his desk. "It's right in there; don't worry, I kept it. — But how about this razor cut business?"

Olard's laughter was triumphant. "Look!" he said in a high voice, his glance half turned toward the gawping corporal and three privates of the work detail. "Look for yourself!"

Slowly, as if he were walking into some sort of trap whose danger he did not yet fully realize, Bertrin came forward and knelt down beside the rigid, half-naked body. Then a low, muttered curse of amazement broke from them. It was there—a small, slight cut perhaps a quarter of an inch long; hardly noticeable in itself, but now redly inflamed and discolored, as was the flesh about it.

"Strange, isn't it?" asked Olard. It was a kind of cackle. "You missed that completely, it seems! And officially you have reported the man dead of an entirely different cause. While anyone can see—even the corporal and these men here—that there was some virulent poison upon that blade. All that was needed was a slight scratch across the poor fellow's neck, which he would hardly feel.—Then, in a few minutes, the poison would fully enter

the bloodstream, and he would die in convulsions, horribly. . . ."

Alternately, while he had been speaking, Olard's eyes had rested on the corporal and the three men of the detail; and then on Bertrin's solemnly tense face. Now, with a quick movement, Olard tapped Bertrin on the shoulder and favored him with a smile in which there was no warmth and very little humor.

"Tell me, lieutenant, when did you last see the dead man?—And under what conditions?"

Bertrin stood very still, his eyes fixed in a dark, fierce stare upon Olard's small, unblinking eyes.

"Last night, late," he said. "He brought me a radio message, here, to my quarters. But, this is a lot of foolishness!—That wine bottle, with all its contents, is right there in the drawer; the man—"

"PARDON me, lieutenant!" Olard held up a hand shoulder high.

"Please answer my question. Were you alone, here in your quarters, when this man, Luchnarsky, came to you?"

"Certainly I was alone. And after giving me his message, he returned almost at once to his post in the radio-room, across the compound."

"I see." Olard's forefingers caught up his full lower lip into a pout. Then he smiled. "And what gives you to think that he was poisoned by this bottle of wine you speak of, and not by this scratch on his neck?"

It took a tremendous struggle of the will of Bertrin to keep his body still, to keep his hands off the smiling man before him, or even answer him in a coherent voice.

"Rolgobar, the other radio operator. The two men shared the same

room; they were the only two operators in the *poste*, and they stood turn and turn about at the instrument. It was Rolgobar who came running over to me, about twenty minutes after Luchnarsky had left, to tell me that the Russian was in convulsions, and writhing around on the floor after drinking this wine."

"*Est-ce-vrai?*"

Olard looked at the corporal and the three wide-eyed privates; then he smiled at them, as if they shared some special secret with him.

"Corporal, please be so good as to go across and get this man, Private Rolgobar. At once!" he commanded.

They stood in silence, waiting, the three privates staring at the body of the dead man and Olard and Bertrin eyeing each other with a hatred which was not quite open. Clearly, they could hear the thudding of the corporal's boots over the compound soil, and the answering beat of the man who loped after him. But the corporal did not speak as he entered the door; it was Rolgobar, the operator.

Rolgobar was a short, dark-skinned, heavy-set man who claimed to be of Hungarian origin. He was bareheaded now, and in his shirt sleeves. Sweat beads glistened on his forehead, and his cropped hair was rumpled by the clips of the radio earphones he had obviously just pulled from his head. He held a scrawled pad sheet in his right hand, shifted it over as he jerked a salute in Bertrin's direction.

"Message just come in, *mon lieutenant*. Addressed to 'M. Olard,' in care of this *poste*. I—"

"I'm Olard. Give me that!"

Unceremoniously, Olard jerked it from his hand, read it swiftly, his lips working as he silently conned the words; then he looked up at Bertrin.

"This may interest you, lieutenant," he said. "You remember our reasons for sending it? . . ."

"COLOMB-BECHAR NUMBER 2-197-912, 17 HOURS

TERRITORIAL, ÉTAT-MAJOR TO
M OLARD AGENT SÛRETÉ GÉNÉRALE

CARE POSTE WEGAND

FULLY CONFIRM YOUR OFFICIAL
IDENTITY AND PURPOSE STOP USE
OWN DISCRETIONARY POWERS STOP
MAKE ANY ARRESTS NECESSARY
STOP CASE FULLY YOUR HANDS"

THE sheet of paper crackled in Olard's hands as he folded it then thrust it carefully into an inside pocket. He smiled when he looked at Bertrin. "That pretty well settles things, doesn't it, lieutenant?"

"Perhaps." The word dropped flatly from Bertrin. He was watching the radio operator, Rolgobar, who had turned to stare at the corpse.

"You! Rolgobar!" The words cracked from Olard, and the man swung toward him, jumping to a position of attention. "I sent the corporal for you for your testimony. You and these other men, here, have just heard that radiogram I read off, and they know that I am a police agent. All right, then. There has been murder committed here, among other things, and I'm out to solve it. . . . When did you last see the dead man?"

"Last night, sir, near midnight. I was with him when he died. But, the lieutenant was there, too—and the medical orderly."

"All right! Easy with it! I'm not accusing you of anything. Just answer the questions as I give them to you. The lieutenant tells me the man's cause of death was from poisoned wine."

"Yes, sir, we all believed that. It was a bottle—"

"Quiet! I've heard about that bottle being brought in from the north. But did you see this bottle when Luchnarsky drank from it?"

"Yes, sir. I was there when he got it out of his *musette* bag."

"But he didn't offer you a drink?"

"Yes, sir. Of course he offered me a drink. He and I were *copains*—buddies."

"But you didn't drink of it?"

Rolgobar's slant eyes glittered darkly behind their heavy lids. "Yes, sir, I drank of it. I—" Then he ducked, flinching back, his arms up over his face to protect him from Bertrin's sudden and fierce forward rush.

"Steady!—Back, you!"

The black gun had leapt into Olard's hand, and was now jammed hard against Bertrin's ribs. Slowly, the lieutenant had retreated, his hands, his body and his face twitching uncontrollably.

Olard gestured toward him with the gun muzzle. "Don't let that man bother you, Rolgobar. He's still wearing a lieutenant's uniform, but he's no longer a lieutenant. I came down here purposely to search him out; he's an admitted murderer and thief, hiding among honest soldiers in the Legion. That was what, in the first place, made me suspicious about Luchnarsky's death—and this man Bertrin's reporting of it.—But go on with your story. When did you and Luchnarsky drink this wine—before or after Luchnarsky came over here to see the lieutenant?"

ROLGOBAR licked his thick lips, cleared his throat. "Before, *m'sieur*. About ten minutes before."

"So!" There was a great grin of

triumph on Olard's flat face. "It was quite late in the evening, wasn't it? Later than Bertrin would expect callers, of any sort, in his private quarters. His quarters here, where that Touareg gold and ivory is buried. . . . *Nom d'un nom!* I don't even have to make an examination or specimen of that bottle of wine to prove my case. This thief might easily have poisoned it himself, after Luchnarsky was officially pronounced dead. . . .

"The whole thing is as clear as the thickest man could wish. Bertrin is a thief and a murderer. He had the same habits before he came back into the Legion. That treasure underneath the floor was too much for him—he must have been digging it up when Luchnarsky surprised him last night. Somehow, he must have lulled the poor lad's curiosity and suspicions, then lightly slashed him with the poisoned razor blade—probably while the man was going out the door.—There is the mark, on Luchnarsky's neck, for anyone to see. And, if it had not been for my arrival here, the man's death would have been put down on the rolls as 'accidental'; and some night Bertrin would have taken a little promenade with all the treasure he could load onto a pack mule or horse.—He would have used his position as commandant here to get swiftly away unnoticed and untracked!"

Olard stopped, panting, swabbed the perspiration from his cheeks with a dirty ball of a handkerchief. He glanced at Rolgobar, the corporal and the privates as if he were an actor performing before them:

"This man—this cowardly murderer, here—has bragged to me tonight that all of you who have blindly accepted his orders, admired, liked and personally respected him. What do

you think of him now?—Would it satisfy you to put your hands upon his throat and pay him back for the murder of that innocent man? But"—he grinned, his lips dragging back—"those are not the words to be uttered by an agent of police. And all the satisfaction I can give you is to promise you that you will see him locked up in one of the cells where he has locked you up for minor infractions from time to time; and that, when I have made absolutely certain of his guilt, I will take him north, to face a court—then either a firing squad or the guillotine!"

"Now, meanwhile, I'm in command here. Get back to your instrument, Rolgobar. You, corporal, rebury that body, at once. As for you, my great friend Bertrin, you will show me just where this fortune is beneath the floor, and you will do me the huge favor of digging it out for me, by yourself—just as the beginning of your payment!"

CHAPTER V.

TOUAREG RAID.

OLARD sat in the chair beside the desk, his derby hat cocked high, his gun in one hand, the bottle of poisoned wine at his elbow on the desk. In the far corner of the room, kept silent by a confusion of rage, wonder and suspicion, Bertrin worked at digging up the soil of the floor, using a shovel which Olard had commandeered for him. For many minutes both of them had been silent; the only sounds were the thuds and scraping clicks of the spade and the whining flight of the gnats around the big overhead kerosene lamp.

Simultaneously, they heard and rec-

ognized Rolgobar's hurried stride coming across the compound. Bertrin straightened up, holding the shovel out before him. Olard's eyes watched him with the darting intensity of a snake's.

"Drop that shovel, you swab!" He hissed the words out. "Stand back in that corner, with your hands above your head! So—until this man has come and gone.—Be quick! I can shoot you now, whenever the fancy moves me. . . ."

He was silent with that, waiting for Rolgobar. The operator was mumbling broken bits of sentences as he came in the door; he did not even look at Bertrin, but swung his glance at Olard, pushing out to him the pad sheet in his hands:

"It's an alarm, from Colomb-Bechar. Signed by Colonel Trinquet. The Touareg—they're headed this way. A Camel Corps *peloton* made contact with them yesterday, near Ouallen. They captured two prisoners, who finally talked. It's a *rezzia* of five hundred camels and men. When the prisoners talked, they said their brothers were after the gold and ivory."

"Shut up, you fool! Enough!" Olard had risen from his chair, and lifted his free hand as if he were about to strike the operator across the face. "Get out of here, quietly—and get another shovel.—We'll have to get this loot and slide away from here as soon as we can!—Where's that lug, Vennel? Find him, and tell him to get the car ready, but to go easy, so these fools won't get suspicious. Move, *crétin*!"

Grinning, nodding, Rolgobar moved toward the door. Within a pace of it he stopped, one of his hands suddenly clawing down for the pistol in his rear trousers pocket. From across the room, the heavy spade had just whis-

tled through the air, catching Olard between the shoulder blades, and knocking him flat, unconscious. Over the man's twitching body Rolgobar fired one shot at the lunging shape of Bertrin, screamed with fear when he saw that he had missed, and tried to fire again. But then Bertrin was upon him, had gripped his gun hand and was battering at his face and throat, slamming him back and down. . . .

Bertrin was strapping the two together, using their belts and one of his own, when Yvec came stumbling and mumbling through the door. There was blood across the sergeant's face, and blood across his khaki tunic front; clots of it were upon his hands. But he laughed and straightened up a little when he saw Bertrin and the two unconscious forms the lieutenant had just dumped into the corner.

"Good! A nice job. I heard the yells and the shot, just as I was coming around from the stable. For a minute I thought I'd be too late. You all right?"

"Yes." Bertrin had advanced close to him. "But how about you?"

Yvec let forth a grunting laugh. "I'll do. But that swab, Vennel, put up more of a battle than I would have thought. He stuck a knife into me—one which he flipped out from his cuff—the minute I started to get tough with him. That's why I was so long; he took a lot of beating before he'd talk, and because of that nick from the knife he gave me, I could only use one hand on him.—But wait a minute! Here's the corporal of the guard."

YVEC'S big frame blocked the doorway. His right hand was down upon the butt of the service automatic at his belt.

"Stop right there, corporal," he

called in a hoarse voice. "No need coming any farther; I've got this all under control here. Go right back where you came from—up on the wall. That's the good boy. And when somebody wants you around here, they'll whistle for you. Understand?"

Outside, the hulking, slow-thinking German corporal of the guard muttered a few words of apology and inquiry in his bad French; then, getting no answer at all from Yvec, who was his superior and the second in post command, he turned back toward the bastions.

"And that's luck!" whispered Yvec as he heeled around into the room. "Now I'll tell you what my little sweetheart, Vennel, whispered into my ear.—But, first, you got a cigarette?"

"That Vennel's a daisy! So are his two pals, here. All of them are crooks—yes, smart crooks. Perhaps Olard's the smartest of the three, but you seem to have taken his count all right, even though you bent the shovel, doing it. Rolgobar, though, is the one who tipped Olard and Vennel off to who you are. Rolgobar's an old Marseilles crook who skipped into the Legion to miss a nice little piece the cops had for him. He knew you by sight when you were working in that joint in Marseilles, years back; and he heard a lot about you, after you broke your old boss's jaw, following that job in Hyeres.

"It was just plain bad luck for you that he finally was transferred into this outfit with us. Although he wasn't going to do anything about that until the colonel and his column brought the Touareg loot in here. Then he got on the wireless key one night, and got in touch with the hangout of his old gang of crooks, in Marseilles. Vennel says they've got a big receiving and send-

ing set, just like some of the bootleg gangs have in the States—and a couple of cop-proof codes."

Bertrin had dropped back against the edge of the desk. His eyes went over to the forms of the two men slumped in the corner, then up to Yvec's lined face.

"The pieces begin to fit now, don't they? All Rolgobar had to do was get rid of Luchnarsky, so that he could get his messages in from Olard and Vennel undisturbed."

Yvec pinched fire from the fringe of his moustache, trod heavily on the quarter-inch of his cigarette remaining. He shook his head.

"No, a little more than that. Olard even went so far as to tip off the cops that you were here, and give them your true identity. According to Vennel—who wasn't lying by the time he got around to telling me this — the *Sûreté* actually did send out an agent to investigate you, as well as the anonymous information about that old job in Hyeres. So Olard and Vennel followed the agent out.

"Somewhere between here and the coast—probably on the train in from Oran to Colomb-Bechar—they fixed it so they could get to that guy, knock him off and get his papers. Then Olard, who's seen enough cops to know how to act like one, takes over the dead guy's identity, gets himself one of the Legion's armored cars, and probably at first, just a driver. He bumps the driver somewhere along the road, and sticks Vennel in his place. Then on here. You know the rest. . . ."

WEARILY, Bertrin smiled. "I should say I do! And as you say, they had to kill poor old Luchnarsky so that Rolgobar, the only other operator in the *poste*, could have

free use of the instrument. Then, too, when I bucked up against Olard this evening he pulled that murder accusation—of my killing Luchnarsky—against me, so that the lads here in the *poste* would lose their liking for me and allow me to be locked up in cells while the three of them got off with the Touareg loot.

"Rolgobar killed Luchnarsky; and he did it with the poisoned wine, not with any razor blade, as Olard claimed. No doubt, however, Rolgobar pricked Luchnarsky's neck with a poisoned razor blade, after the man was rolling around on the floor in convulsions from the wine. Naturally, I could see no reason for murder, and the wine was bad when I tested it, so I didn't look for any other marks or signs of a violent death!—Well, all that I can say is that they almost pulled it. But they're all through now—just as much, I guess, as I am."

Yvec took off his battered *képi* and studied the lining for an instant. "No," he said in a slow, soft voice, "I don't see that. That armored car is out there, with plenty of oil and gas in the tanks. That Touareg junk is under the floor here; and you and I could get it out in a couple of hours. Then you could take that, and the armored car, as your back pay from the French Government, and you could make it easily into the Rio del Oro country, across the Spanish border—just as those three lugs planned to do it. I'd never weep in my pillow over that; not while the French Government's got the style of saying if a man is once a crook, he always stays a crook. . . . So, come on; let's get at it, before dawn—and before the boys are fully awake."

Bertrin laughed then, and his hands were out, upon Yvec's stooped, broad

shoulders. "No," he said gently, "some guys stay crooks, and some don't. I'm one that hasn't.—Furthermore, Rolgobar brought in a real message, just before I got to him and Olard. The Touareg are on their way in here right now—a whole mess of them, looking for their loot. Maybe after they're gone I'll go—but without the loot, anyhow. All that business will have to wait, though. Lieutenant or no, there's plenty of work around here for me right now—and for you, too.—Where's Vennel?"

"Tied up with a halter, on the manure heap in the stable."

"Go get him out and put him in a cell—with these two. Then call the bugler and rout out the boys. I want to talk to them; and you'll have to talk to them, too, about all this. I want them to obey me and fight for me, when the Touareg put their show on."

"*Oui, mon lieutenant!*" Yvec's long face was grave, his heels together. Then he saluted, turned, and was gone.

YVEC had fallen them in, dressed the ranks. In the pale half light of the oncoming dawn, as Bertrin strode forward from his quarters to take Yvec's salute, then stand before the men, they rested sharply at attention. His eyes flashed down the line, over each face, marking each man, each expression. His voice was very clear as he said:

"All of you know, one way or another, something of what has happened to-night. A man who has passed himself off as an agent of the *Sûreté Générale* has come in here from the north in that car. He has accused me of being a murderer and a thief—in connection with an old job committed years ago, and outside of the Legion. But more than that, he has accused me of

murdering Luchnarsky, a man who has served and fought faithfully with me—and with you—for over two years.

"I do not defend myself; I do not say anything more. Sergeant Yvec gained a confession from the supposed *Légionnaire* who drove in that car—and Rolgobar, the operator, who is now in a cell, along with those other two, is the man who actually killed Luchnarsky. Now speak up, Sergeant!"

"*Oui, m'sieur!*"

Yvec touched his cap brim, turned from his position beside the right guide, and strode to the center of the front rank, not a pace away from the staring men.

"You've heard the lieutenant, you? And you know me?—Good! Because whatever the lieutenant says is so, I also say is so. And if any man doubts that, let him fall out, two paces to the front—and I'll take him over to talk personally with those three rats. But first, he talks to me—and to these." Grinning, Yvec lifted and turned his huge, hamlike hands. "No?—No customers? Fine! . . ." His head swung. "Anything more you wish to say, lieutenant?"

"Yes, thank you, sergeant. Take your post."

Bertrin's eyes were again on the men; he talked to them in an almost conversational tone.

"Rolgobar is the man who murdered Luchnarsky, but he did us one favor before we found him out—he brought in a radio message from the north.—A big Touareg *rezzia* is headed for here right now. It should be here any minute. They're after their loot, which is buried over there; and they'll take our heads along with it, unless we stop them. . . . You

understand me? And you understand that I am still your commanding officer, and will remain so until this is finished with the Touareg? All right!—Speak up, then, and let me know it!"

It was a growled shouting sound they made; not a cheer—nor anything like a cheer. But it made Yvec softly smile, and it brought a sudden film of nervous moisture to the corners of Bertrin's eyes. Silently, as a group, he saluted them, thanking them. Then:

"Posts! Platoon—dismissed!"

CHAPTER VI.

ARMORED CAR.

BEHIND a high, masking dune, perhaps two kilometers to the west, the Touareg had left most of their camels. When the first charge broke forth upon the post in the lavender light of the dawn, only about a hundred beasts thudded forward over the sand and shale. But hanging to the stirrups on either side of each beast was a warrior who ran on foot, his modern, high-caliber rifle slung from his shoulder, his mouth open as he screamed to Allah.

On the walls, Bertrin held the fire of all but his heavy duty machine guns until the charge was within two hundred yards of the *poste*. Then he let go his whistle blast, and the rifles, the Chauchat guns and the rifle-grenades crashed forth their first torrent of death.

Most of the big, dun-colored camels fell, kicking and nickering in agony. But the bare-legged, dark warriors came on, crawling close to the sand.

"So!" muttered Yvec, where he crouched beside Bertrin, a pair of field glasses at his eyes. "These black lads

were always the best fighters of any tribe, but they seemed to have learned some new, smart tricks. Did you see? They were carrying entrenching tools — shovels and spades — on the camels. Now their rag-tag infantry are plucking those off, and bringing them forward. . . .”

“Just that!” Bertrin was turning the adjustment screw of his own glasses, staring off into the desert as he did so. “These fellows have fought against European troops—against the Spaniards and ourselves in the Riffi War, and against the Italians over in Tripolitania. They’ve learned the trick of infiltration by waves; and they’re digging in now, making fox-holes. Now, here comes the second wave, from the dunes. And those lugs who have been digging in are running forward to make a fresh line. . . .”

He swung, calling an order to the men handling the heavy duty Hotchkiss guns, establishing the range and radius of fire. Beside him, Yvec quietly directed the fire of the riflemen and light machine gunners, thrashing lead down the nearer slope at the swiftly crawling Touaregs who had just left their first line of new, shallow holes.

“Clever, huh?” commented Yvec, pushing gently back from him the twitching body of a machine gunner who had just been killed by a ricocheting Touareg slug. “They break our fire up in two parts this way; keep one part on the guys running out from the dunes, and the other part on these guys right below, in the fox-holes. . . . Do you think we can keep enough of ’em back from getting close in, where those first guys are now?”

“No.” Bertrin spoke without hesitation. “I don’t. They’ve got a system there that has never failed to work, even before a force a whole lot big-

ger than the one we’ve got here. But—”

“Listen to me,” said Yvec in a low, steady voice. “Those guys know almost to a man how many lads we got here. But we got one joker in the pack they don’t know about—that armored car our little playmates brought in. If you slid open the gates all of a sudden, and set that thing rolling down the slope, right over their fox-holes, with the two machine guns in it going, why—”

“IT might work—yes. But, I’m not ready yet to ask any man here to volunteer for that job. Once it got off the slope, that crate couldn’t make any more than twenty miles an hour, in the soft sand. And some of their big running camels can go that fast. There’s a pretty good chance they’d overhaul it, shoot the lads inside through the firing-slits, and burn it up. Like the Jebel Druse did with more than one other car, during the campaign out in Syria.”

“Maybe, maybe.” Yvec nodded as he spoke. “But I’ve been thinking that you’ve got three guys here who might be more than pleased to volunteer. Their names are Olard, Vennel and Rolgobar.”

“It’s one of three ways out for them. If they stay in the cells where they are now, and we lose, they’ll die with us. If we win, they’ll face an army court, then life-time pieces in Guiana, or they’ll go to the guillotine. While if they can smash through the Touaregs and get away, I don’t think any guy would lose his breath trying to call ’em back again from the Spanish country, or South America.—And you’d be quits with them, if they’d write you out a little confession first, huh?”

"If they wrote a confession first, yes.—But I'll go talk to them in—"

His words broke short; his head and his eyes swerved back as he stared up at the sky.

"There's a plane," he said hoarsely. "A little one-place fighter. He's diving right down on us, probably with a message, or to see if we're still doing business."

"Message," mumbled Yvec, staring through narrowed lids. "He just dropped it then. Shall I go get it?"

"Yes. But, watch yourself."

The tiny, light parachute had dropped slantingly when released from the pilot's gauntleted hand. Now it rested fluttering on the mud roof of the stable, across the compound, and in full view of the Touaregs swarming the slope below. But the tribesmen were intent on the zooming plane; they were either firing madly at it, or were flattened out hard against the sand, their heads covered in abject fear.

Resting for several minutes at a time, utterly exposed to all fire, Yvec crawled out across the flat roof, scooped the thing to him and jumped back into safety. He had ripped the message sheet free from its weighted canvas sack when he returned to Bertrin's side and placed it in his hands.

The message was short, constructed in huge, sprawled characters, in pencil. Obviously, it had been written while the pilot guided the plane with his feet and knees. It read:

WHY DON'T YOU STAND BY
YOUR WIRELESS? BECHAR CALL-
ING FOR HOURS. COLONEL TRIN-
QUET COLUMN WITHIN TEN
KILOMETERS OF YOU NOW. HOLD
OUT HOUR MORE. LUCK!

Bertrin was slowly smiling as he re-read it, rumbled it into a ball and

jammed it into his pocket. "That," he whispered, "is that."

Yvec shook his gaunt head impatiently. "Sure, it's 'that.'—But, how about the three daisies down in the cells? You going to lose half your men, keeping the Touareg off your walls, when that armored car is waiting down there, with those three mugs waiting just to use it?"

"No, I'm not!" Bertrin was pushing back toward the steps leading down from the bastion. "I'm going to offer them that job right now.—But you stay here and handle this while I'm gone."

IT was dark in the little passage which flanked the cell holding the three. Bertrin could hardly see to write, and he could hardly see their faces through the bars.

"There it is," he said, pushing forth the strips of paper between the bars in the upper half of the door. "I've written it in pencil, and it's clear enough, and proof enough—a confession from each one of you. From you, Olard and Vennel, for the police agent you killed up north—and the man or men you must have killed to steal that armored car. And one for you, Rolgobar, just to prove that it was you who murdered Luchnarsky in cold blood, and not I. . . . Sign those—or don't.

"You all heard the plane which just came overhead. Trinquet and his column will be in here in an hour now. Which do you want—the gamble against the Touareg, or the firing squad or guillotine?"

Somehow, during the hours they had spent in the cell, the three men had freed their hands. Vennel was the first to stick his through, asking in a broken, croaking voice for his own slip. Olard leapt upon him from be-

hind, then, and struck at him, cursing him for a coward. But Rolgobar struck at Olard in turn, warning him to let Vennel and himself be. Those two signed them; Vennel first, Rolgobar after him, taking the stub of pencil Bertrin held out.

Olard had stood quiet, watching, his body held immobile. But suddenly a wild, strangled cursing came from him, and he jammed close up against the bars, yelled at Bertrin:

"All right—all right! Give me mine, too! You're a—"

"Shut up!" Bertrin jabbed the automatic muzzle right in his face. "I've had enough out of you, rat! I'll shoot, the next time!—Sign, or be still!"

Then he laughed aloud, for already Olard was signing.

YVEC came down from the walls for a moment to open the gate in person. It was he who crawled into the armored car, started the motor slowly turning over, fed the ammunition belt tongues into the two light machine guns in the turrets, and locked the guns so that they could not, for a moment at least, be fired in any direction but forward. Now he pummeled loose the great steel bar which locked the wings of the *poste* gate.

At the point of Bertrin's automatic, the last of the three clambered up into the car, and Bertrin slammed shut the steel doors behind them. Yvec pulled the bar up and aside. The gate sagged open. The big Renault motor rumbled and roared. The solid rubber tires bit at the sand, then spun and drove forward, down the steep incline.

As Bertrin helped the sergeant shut the gate, they could hear the first racketing bursts as the twin turret guns began to lash forth their lead.

"Come on!" yelled Yvec, grinning. "The place to watch this is from the walls!"

The Renault had struck squarely down the slope, leaping like some terrible metal monster upon the Touareg in their shallow fox-holes. At sight of it, the Touareg screamed and hooted; then they fired, point-blank, and began to run, beaten at from behind by its gusts of death. It rode right over some of those men and rumbled on, slowed by softer sand.

"See! That's what I told you!" muttered Bertrin to Yvec. "The chiefs are calling out the camelmen from behind the dunes. They'll surround the thing before it goes another hundred yards."

"No." Yvec had stooped, to take a bayoneted rifle from a dead man's hands. "Not if we leave our machine gunners here to wrap those camels in lead, and take the rest of the lads down in a good, old-fashioned bayonet attack. — And look! See that — over there? Those are Spahi troopers—and the Legion is behind! Do we charge?"

"Yes," said Bertrin in a harsh voice. He was rapidly reloading his automatic. "We charge!"

THE hard-riding Spahi troopers had made a cordon a mile or so wide which they slowly yet steadily narrowed as they rode in, the three Legion companies of Colonel Trinquet's command going ahead of them at the *pas gymnastique*. The center of that narrowing circle was the Renault armored car. It was there that the Touareg, seeing that they were trapped, outnumbered and surrounded, chose to die. It was there they met the charge of the men led by Bertrin and Yvec, the men who had raced down the slope from the *poste* under the cover

of their machine-gunners, as they came, wiping up the last tribesmen in the lines of fox-holes on the slope.

But neither Bertrin nor any of the men with him saw any of that trio within the armored car again. Blood or fear-crazed Touareg had crawled over its steel sides like flies, jammed the muzzles of their guns through the small firing slits, and loosed hundreds of rounds into the murky, smoke-filled interior, until the three inside were silent forever. Bertrin and his men realized that, and took advantage of it; they drove the Touareg up against the sides of the car as they would drive them up against a wall, then spitted them on the narrow Legion bayonets.

When the diminutive, quiet-moving Colonel Trinquet brought in his first waves, it was just about all over, and was then immediately finished.

Sword in one hand, automatic pistol in the other, Trinquet pushed through to where Bertrin stood, fumblingly bandaging up a bullet crease on his right shoulder.

"Lieutenant Bertrin, isn't it?" snapped the little man, before Bertrin had a chance to even stand erect.

"Yes, *mon colonel*." Bertrin spoke slowly; had difficulty with his words.

The colonel sheathed his sword with a clatter, his eyes on Bertrin's blood-shot eyes. "I thought so.—Heard about you when they called me into Bechar from that Tdala job.—You've had visitors, haven't you? Keep quiet—I know all about that, and you. About four days ago, the railway police found a body, between Oran and Bechar. Then they traced back. The visitors passed themselves off as an agent named Olard, and a Legion car driver named Vennel. They were crooks from Marseilles. And they

must have had at least one other man down here to help them. Is that right?"

"Yes, sir."

"And your name used to be Brown?"

"Yes, sir."

"Uh-huh! And you were supposed to have killed a man in Hyeres once, weren't you—when you got foolish and left the Legion for a time?"

"Yes, sir. I—"

"I'll do all the talking, lieutenant!—Did you do that job in Hyeres—murder the man or not?—'Yes' or 'no'; that's all I want."

"No, sir. I did not."

"Huh!" The colonel had refilled his pistol magazine clip. Now he returned the weapon to its holster. "That's what I thought—and what I told them up north. Not that it matters; not that any proof that you've got defending yourself matters. I'm a colonel in this outfit, and I know a real soldier when I see one. You're one.—And there's no sense in sending a good soldier to the guillotine, or to Guiana—no matter what the law says. And sometimes we can even fix the law—if it's worth fixing. . . . Where are those three guys?"

"In there." Bertrin pointed.

Trinquet smiled. "A good place for them! Who put them there?"

"I did, *mon colonel*. They—"

"I know. I could see that through my glasses.—And, I repeat: a good place for them. The best. We might, in fact, even get a *Légion d'Honneur* and a captaincy for the smart guy who put them there. . . . Now, how about it—have you got a drink of beer for a dry man, up in your *poste*?"

"Yes, *mon colonel*," said Bertrin very slowly. It was a low, cracked whisper. But Trinquet heard it, understood it, and smiled.

THE END.

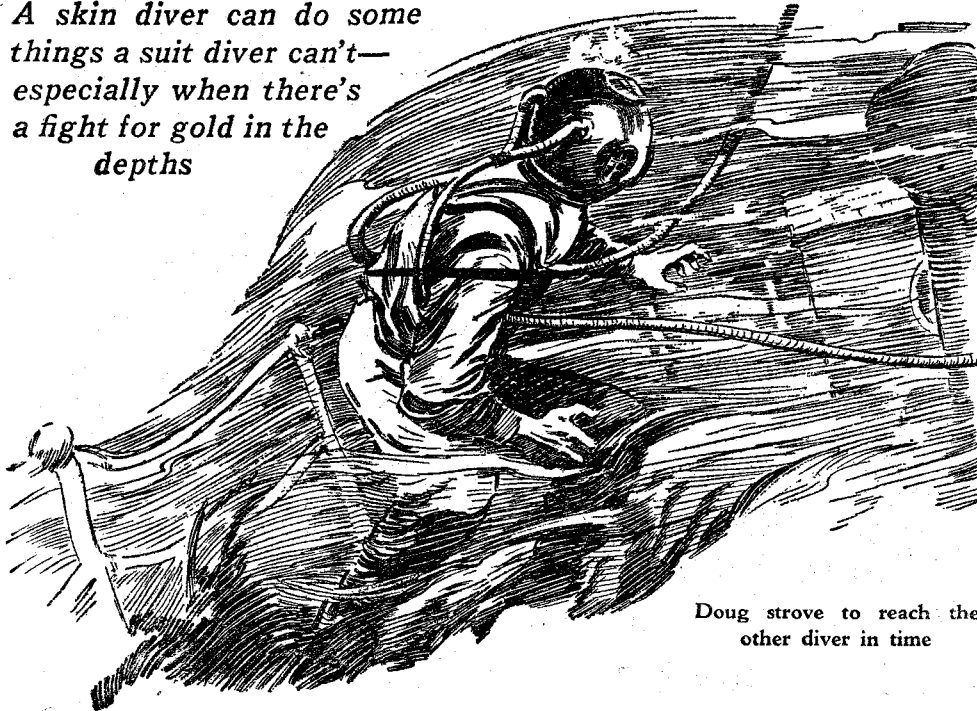
Skin Diver

By JACK ALLMAN

Author of "Murder at the Mine," "Scuttled Gold," etc.

Novelette—Complete

A skin diver can do some things a suit diver can't—especially when there's a fight for gold in the depths



Doug strove to reach the other diver in time

CHAPTER I.

ALMOST A MILLION.

SLOWLY, with the cumbersome, unsure movements of a man out of his element, Doug Milton worked his way across the hard-packed coral sand.

Pressing his way through the emerald green waters, he resembled some goblin-like creature. His big diving helmet, somewhat battered from years of use, was a head to inspire fear even to the darting, bright-hued fish. The glass face ports were the eyes, and the curving lines of hose and rope leading

to the surface were tentacles. Spots and stripes covered his body—black against gray, where the gum outlined the patches over holes and rips in the rubberized fabric of his suit.

The afternoon sun penetrated deep through the glassy surface of the sea, and Doug was covering a wide path with his keenly alert eyes. He could spot a sponge at almost unbelievable distance, but apparently there were none to find. He kept plodding along, leaning far forward against the pressure that surrounded him. The small schooner on top kept pace with occasional kicks of her screw.

The white coral sand floor began to fall away in front of him; at first in a gentle slope, and then more sharply. He turned off. No use getting into deeper water than necessary, with the old and much repaired equipment a constant menace.

The Portsmouth Belle! He rolled the name around on his tongue, but it meant not a thing to him.

A discovery which he made a few minutes later did, though. She was a steel ship, evidently designed for combination passenger and freight carry-



He was about to cut the air hose

Just as he changed his course, something down the slope caught his eye. It was something large and dark, and quite foreign to the surrounding ocean bed. He knew what it was in a second, and his heart-beat stepped up a trifle. It was always a pleasant break in the work to find the rotting hulk of some long-forgotten ship, though always the only reward was the thrill of being the first to explore it.

He came upon her quartering upon the bow. Just above his head he could see the huge raised letters of her name, but sea growth prevented him from reading it. He felt them out, spelling them to himself as he went along—P-O-R-T-S-M-O-U-T-H B-E-L-L-E.

ing; and though half buried in sand, she was obviously a recent loss, as time is measured in those things. Doug made a guess at twenty years, then he found the hole in her side and knew that she was a war casualty. Only one thing could have punched that hole through her plates—an armor-piercing shell.

He couldn't find the injury that had sent her down, however. Probably a torpedo below the water line, which was now many feet under the sand.

After a hasty survey he cleared his lines and gave them four sharp jerks. Slowly, he was lifted from his feet, hauled up. The green around him became lighter in shade. He could see

the silvery breaking of the string of bubbles from his helmet exhaust, as they reached the surface. Then his face felt the warming glow of the sun through the ports. He grasped his partner's hand and pulled himself over the low rail.

LOU SMART was smaller than Doug; about five feet ten instead of six feet flat, and weighing around twenty pounds less—somewhere in the neighborhood of one-eighty. His hair was brown, but bleached on the ends by salt water and sun. His skin was burned brown, not only on his face, but also over his thick torso, where it showed through the deep armholes and low neck of his "scivvy" shirt, the only garment he wore except a pair of frayed and faded khaki trousers. Even his bare feet were the color of saddle leather.

Doug's face was tanned, too, but it was many shades lighter than his partner's. The thick hair that lay sweat-plastered to his brow, when Lou gave the helmet its quarter-turn and lifted it off, was jet black, with just the suggestion of a wave to it. His eyes were brown, while those that lit up with excitement as he told of the discovery below were a deep blue. Lou was the kind to manufacture enthusiasm.

"Boy, oh, boy!" he said. "Sunk during the war! Say, there may be a million in salvage on her! Some of 'em had. And she's down in only eighteen fathom!"

Doug gave his head the slightest of jerks toward the two big Jamaica blacks. Bare to the waist, they were resting from their labors on the horizontal handles of the air pump.

"Better keep this to ourselves till we know what's what and get everything arranged," he cautioned. "She

looks like she might be a prize, all right. We'll have to have other equipment."

"Boy, oh, boy! No more sponge-diving for us!"

"Well, we'll have to wait and see. Maybe there's nothing there. Soon's I finish this smoke I'm going back down and put a buoy line on her. I'll take a look around."

"You'd better hurry. Here come some of the others."

Lou swung an arm out to sea. Eight or ten boats were heading back toward them; every one pointing due west and steering for the small sponge port on the low Florida coast.

Doug took a last long drag and flipped his cigarette butt over the rail. He braced himself against the quarter-turn that locked his helmet on the bayonet joint. The two blacks bent and straightened over the pump handles. Air pulsed into the suit.

Above, from the rail, Lou watched the course of the bubble string, after Doug hit bottom. He moved the boat a bit to take up the drift.

Down in the green depths, Doug bent his line to the wreck, and then made a tour of the sunken boat's interior. Once he stopped and looked up through the port above his forehead. He couldn't see the other boat, but he knew it was there, for he could feel the beat of the propeller in the water. He heard it stop.

Clearing his lines, he gave Lou the signal to hoist away. When he broke the surface it was to see a trim craft riding easily near by. Behind the glass of his port his face tightened a little. Leo Papadous again—stopping by to brag.

He clambered to the deck and skinned quickly out of his suit. Though he didn't appear to be looking, his eyes

took in the long festoons of fine sponges that swung from the other boat's rigging. Sure, Papadous was getting sponges; why shouldn't he? He had the best schooner out of Balate. A power compressor. Good suits. Good hose. No cumbersome repair coupling clamps, like those that dotted the one at Doug's feet, every fathom or so.

The Papadous family were real sponge men, too. Had been ever since the first of Leo's forebears had set skin-diving records for depth in the Ægean Sea which bit deeply into their native Greece. Good sponge men—but bad men to do business with.

THERE were many others of Leo's nationality running out of Balate, and they too gave him a wide berth. Not because of envy over the fine rig which his sharp-dealing father had left him, but because they were afraid of him—unable to trust him and unwilling to take his word.

Leo Papadous knew that he wasn't liked, and probably that was why he swaggered so, when at almost every auction his was the largest lot to be offered. He never lost an opportunity to crow about it, either.

Now, as he stood at the rail of his smart schooner and looked across the thirty feet that separated him from Doug, he loosed a barbed shaft of sarcasm—his favorite manner of being offensive and hurtful.

"Fine bunch of horses and sheep wools!" he said, nodding to the pitifully poor harvest which represented Doug's long hours of work on the bottom. "You have all the luck—find all the good beds.—Must be makin' lots of money, eh?" His white teeth flashed in a grin.

"We're not kicking," lied Doug. His voice was barely civil.

Leo laughed and stabbed a finger toward the quartered red and yellow buoy. "See," he laughed. "What'd I tell you about luck? I'll bet you're coming back to-morrow to the finest bed between Balate and the Bahamas."

"You'd be surprised what we're coming coming back to to-morrow," piped up Lou.

Doug gave him a look full of meaning, then waved good-by to Papadous.

Leo waved a tanned arm, and turned to his engineman.

Later, as they were churning toward home, Doug took Lou to task about making such an unwise crack in front of Leo Papadous.

"Notice the way his eyes narrowed?" he asked. "That fellow's always on the lookout for something."

"Aw, Leo's all right," countered Lou. "Just got to understand him, that's all."

Doug didn't answer. He understood all he wanted to about Leo; and he understood, too, that his partner was more than a little interested in Maina Papadous, Leo's young sister.

For long minutes Doug sat watching Bucko and Toby, the two blacks, as they sat on the foredeck pounding the fleshy life out of the elastic skeletons of the day's harvest.

"I'll get in touch with a friend of mine," he said presently, "and I'm sure he'll advance me enough money to get a new suit and install a compressor. There's bound to be enough salvage to cover that cost, but it would be suicide to try and do anything with this old outfit of ours."

WHEN they docked, Bucko and Toby, the two blacks, hit for their tiny shack up the beach.

Doug left Lou to put things in shape for the night.

"I want to catch that insurance man," he said.

As he passed the exchange, he saw Leo loafing with some of his crew in front of The Spongers' Retreat, combination speakeasy and restaurant. As he passed, he pretended to be interested in something out upon the dusk-shrouded sea.

Within half an hour he was returning, with a wide grin and a piece of paper in his hand. Lou was just finishing up his work.

"Here it is." Doug handed him the slip. "I copied off the dope on her for you."

The paper read:

Portsmouth Belle . . . British registry
 . . . 14,000 tons . . . New Orleans to
 Havre . . . last reported, 7 P.M. May 10,
 1916 . . . 30 miles SW Marquesas Key,
 Florida . . . cargo, airplane spruce, zinc
 and cereals . . . also carrying £160,000 in
 gold bullion.

Lou's eyes were like saucers when he finished reading. "Boy, oh, boy!—Let's see—five times one sixty . . . Whew! Why, that's over three-quarters of a million dollars!"

"Now, listen," said Doug. "I've already sent the wire to my friend in Jacksonville. I didn't say just what, but I told him that we had a chance to clean up big. If he sends me the dough to-morrow, we'll rig up the old tub here and get right out there after her."

"Boy, oh, boy!" repeated Lou as they walked back up the dock. "Three-quarters of a million!" He had to keep telling himself in order to believe it.

"It's right there, waiting for us to grab it off," said Doug. "We'll get it first, and then talk salvage splits afterwards.—Now just try to forget that you ever heard of the Portsmouth

Belle. Not a word to anyone.—I'm going to scout around and see if I can get wind of a good compressor that can be picked up cheap."

"Okay," said Lou. "See you in the morning."

"Get around early," suggested Doug. "We'll be plenty busy getting the rig into shape. I'd like to tackle her at the end of the week."

CHAPTER II.

EXCITEMENT.

THE next morning, Doug was down before the sun was more than a foot above the shimmering water horizon. He climbed aboard, and made measurements for setting a compressor bed. When Bucko and Toby showed up, he told them there would be no diving for a couple of days. He'd let them know.

Bucko stood around first on one foot and then the other, finally working up courage enough to put the finger on Doug for "Jes' a coupla dollahs, tuh buy some little things with."

After they had gone, Doug went back to his work. It was perhaps an hour later that he began to wonder where his partner was. Lou was usually right on the job—if he hadn't been drinking the night before.

With a jolt he recalled, too, that the Papadous boat hadn't been in her berth when he came down. That was pretty early for Leo to be pulling out.

A strange premonition that something had happened during the night possessed him. He made inquiries at the Retreat, and found that Lou had been there quite late the evening before. Papadous had been there, too. Naturally, that would mean that *moustika* had been flowing, and Doug

knew the potency of that whitish liquor. One meets it on every hand in Greek settlements.

The suspicion growing on him every minute that Lou had probably got drunk and talked too much, he struck off for the tall waterfront house where the Papadous clan held forth.

Maina came to the door. No, of course Lou Smart wasn't there at that time of the morning. No, she hadn't seen him the night before, either.

Doug gave her one of his most engaging grins. "Well, he and Leo were together, and I was just wondering if Lou went out with him. Maybe to work as relief diver, or something."

"I don't think my brother is out on the beds to-day," said Maina. "He left real early. Some of the boys were up here, and they took their rifles. They were probably going off for a day hunting 'gators."

Doug thanked her and left. The information she had given him was all he needed. He burned up the street, on the way back to the dock, and at every step he grew madder.

He knew that Lou hadn't double-crossed him—that is, not intentionally. He'd stake his life on his partner's honor. But this wouldn't be the first time Lou had talked too much.

Lou was waiting for him on the dock stringer by the boat, when he got back. His eyes were bloodshot, and they sheepishly avoided Doug's.

"Sorry I was so late," he said.

"Late! What did you tell Leo?"

Lou shook his head, and then pressed the heels of his palms to his temples to drive the pain away. "Nothing," he said. "We ran into each other in the Retreat, and had a few drinks together. That's all."

"And you didn't say anything? Didn't mention our finding the boat?"

Again Lou shook his head. "Nope! I passed out, and I don't even remember how I got home. But I know I didn't blab anything."

"Well, I know you must have," snapped back Doug.

He told Lou what he had learned, and on top of his hang-over it was a hard blow for Smart to take. He really didn't remember saying anything, but he admitted that he must have, after learning about Leo's actions. He was genuinely sorry, for he thought as much of Doug as he would have of a brother.

"I'll never touch another drink of *moustika* as long as I live!" he said, solemnly.

Doug snorted. "And I've heard that before, too."

He turned on his heel and walked away. Lou followed him with his eyes, knowing that Doug would have nothing more to say about the matter.

That was what hurt Lou. He'd pulled boners before—boners that had cost them money. But Doug never reproached him. Lou wished that he would. He'd much rather take a good beating at the hands of his partner than to have him turn silently away.

At a bellowed summons that answered his knock, Doug stepped into the shack. He saw that the couple of dollars' worth of little things that Bucko had wanted came in a bottle. It looked suspiciously like some of that Everglade Rum.

"You boys want some excitement?" he asked.

The two blacks were on their feet in a flash, wanting to know what, when and where.

"Right now," said Doug. "Got any guns?"

Bucko dove into a box of junk, and

came up with a proud gleam in his eye and a young cannon in his hand. "An' it's a goo' one, boss! Shoots like all git out.—Ain't got no bullets, though."

It took Doug the better part of an hour to rustle four serviceable guns which, with plenty of ammunition, he took down to the boat. Lou was there, looking pretty much under the weather. His eyes were bloodshot; and as he waited for his partner to say something, he kept licking his dry lips.

When Doug completely ignored him, going ahead about the work of getting ready, Lou rose unsteadily to his feet.

"Say," he snapped. "What am I? A dog 'r something?"

"No—only a fool. Dogs are smarter than some people I know. Not so much mouth."

Doug's suppressed anger set Lou off like a match to gunpowder. He had been planning to tell his partner how sorry he was, but it was too late now. All the traditional hatred and jealousy that the skin diver has for the successor who works in suits came to the surface.

Up to now, both Doug and Lou had laughed at the thought that modern equipment was made for less brave men who went below the surface for the vegetable growth from which they both made their living. It was true that skin divers who developed three-minute lungs had something to be proud of, but Lou had also recognized the courage it took to work on the bottom thirty times that long, in thin fabric, and depending entirely upon compressed air that stank of oil.

FOR the first time since they had become partners, Lou brought up the subject. He spat out:

"Yeah!—Big Shot! It's your wreck,

I suppose.—Yours because you found it. I suppose I got no interest in it because I don't wander around the bottom in deep water."

Doug wheeled, fastened him with an angry stare, but he kept his mouth shut.

Lou's voice rose higher. "Sure! You found the wreck. You get the credit.—What if I did talk last night? What difference does it make? You'll be the hero. I'm only a skin diver. Good enough to work in shallow water. Good enough to burn my lungs out when things go tough and we can't hire men to man your damned air pumps. If it wasn't for your sissy methods, we wouldn't have last year's earnings tied up in equipment—and practically every cent we make going out in wages for Bucko and Toby."

Doug's face had drained white. He took a couple of steps toward Lou, and his hands were balled into fists. "You'll get your share," he said. "But you'll do your half of the work, too. Get down there and start that motor."

For a moment Lou hesitated, and when Doug swung him around by the shoulder he raised his fist to strike. Doug grabbed his arm and twisted it almost out of its socket.

"Save the fightin' till we get this thing settled," he said tensely. "Let's get out there and see what Leo Papadous intends to do with the information you blabbed out while you were drunk last night."

Grumblingly, Lou kicked over the motor. They pulled away from the dock.

Bucko and Toby lay stretched out on the deck, singing off the effects of their bottle. Every once in a while they lifted themselves to stare over the rail with wide, white-rimmed eyes.

Lou, still crabbing, but realizing that

a fight now might jeopardize their chances of getting all the gold from the wreck, coaxed and teased extra revs from the old engine until she almost shook herself loose from the bed. The low coastline fell rapidly astern, and Doug held the boat's nose straight for the sunken Portsmouth Belle.

Soon they sighted the fleet; tiny dots far ahead on the wide expanse of the Atlantic. Lou took the wheel while Doug loaded the guns and instructed the blacks in their use. The dots on the horizon grew rapidly, and Lou gave the wheel a couple of spokes as Doug picked up Leo's boat through his glasses. It was some distance off to one side, and perhaps two miles closer to them than the others.

A black ribbon of smoke was forging down from the north, but the craft that belched it was still hull down.

DOUg left Lou with the wheel and stood in the bow, a rifle leaning against the rail close by. Their schooner was old and rickety, but she was far from shabby. She bore down on the other boat like a proud charger, and their identifying red and yellow flag snapped in the breeze.

Doug saw the men on the Papadous boat hurriedly pull a helmeted figure up over the rail; evidently, they were preparing for trouble. He saw them string out at intervals on the deck, and he counted six of them.

As he came close enough to recognize which was the owner, he saw Leo cup his hands to his lips, and he caught a faint shout. Lou cut the motor down, and then the words came clear across the water.

"Keep wide!—Swing clear!"

Papadous was motioning them off to the side. Some of the crew lifted rifles and rested them on the rail.

"How about our buoy rights?" shouted back Doug.

"Buoy rights, hell! They're for sponges. We're working on a wreck we've located." There was a jeering laugh. Then, "Swing clear I tell you—or we'll make you!"

"Give 'er the gun, Lou," called Doug.

Lou obeyed, but the sudden load was too much for the old engine. She kicked the boat ahead with a couple of vicious explosions, and then gave a wheezy cough. A rifle shot rang out from the other craft, and a splinter was clipped from the rail beside Doug. Almost instantly two answers went back. Bucko and Toby had been waiting, kneeling at the rail.

Doug grabbed up his rifle and joined them, as a regular fusillade was poured at them. Lou left his disabled engine and ran for his gun. Without power or a hand on the wheel, their boat swung off in a flat circle. It was necessary to change position every few minutes.

Bullets whipped across the water, struck and went whining off into the bright sunlight. Some of them imbedded themselves with dull *thwanks*. One found Bucko's shoulder, and he let out an eerie curse. Toby saw the blood stream down the black arm of his buddy, and pumped his gun as fast as it would work. He was on his feet now, defiantly challenging the shots from the other boat. One swished through the fleshy part of his thigh, but he did not even stop to look.

Doug maneuvered them around till they all had protection from which to return the fire. He held them back, cautioning them to wait for visible targets. A bullet hit a stanchion, darted off at an angle, and etched a red streak along his ribs. Lou lay flat on the

deck, shooting out through the rail netting. One wouldn't have to be a lip reader to know what he was saying to himself as he looked through his gun sights with an angry blue eye.

The boats were constantly getting further apart, and as the Papadous schooner made no use of her power to bring them closer together, Doug gave an order to cease all firing.

"We'll open up only if they start to drop a man over," he said. "And that isn't very likely. How bad is the engine?"

"I'll take a look," said Lou.

"See if you can fix it. Perhaps we can keep them from finding out that we're crippled. If we start to drift too much, we'll drop the hook."

CHAPTER III.

DOWN UNDER.

FOR another half-hour both boats played a waiting game. Perhaps a dozen shots were fired—just enough to keep everyone under cover.

Suddenly Bucko let out a yell and pointed. "Lookit 'at baby come."

Bearing down on them, and still unreeling her ribbon of smoke, came a long, rakish gray boat that set low in the water.

"Revenue cutter," said Doug; and as she pulled up they saw that he was right.

Blue uniform and gold braid hailed both boats from the bridge. Doug told them he was crippled, and they passed him a line, drew him up and made him fast to their port side. Leo's boat was on the other.

A stern, authoritative voice ordered every man aboard. "Now what's been going on here?" demanded the ruddy-faced commander of the govern-

ment boat. "I've had my glasses on you. You're both armed.—What's the answer? Hijacking a whiskey cargo?"

He spotted the little pool of blood at Toby's feet, and saw blood dripping from Bucko's fingers. He ordered the doctor to take them below and fix them up.

"Any others?" he demanded. Two from the other boat needed attention. Doug decided to say nothing about the streak along his ribs. A bandage was all he'd need, and he could do that himself. He stood answering Leo's stare of anger with a steady gaze, until the commander demanded answers to his questions.

"We ran into an old wreck, and we was looking it over when these fellows come along and try to drive us off," spoke up Papadous.

"You lie like hell!"

A couple of the cutter officers stopped Lou's rush.

"Well, what's your story?" asked the commander, after a double hammerlock had quieted Smart down.

Lou jerked his head toward Doug. "Milton, here, is the skipper. He can tell you the truth. Tell 'em, Doug. Tell 'em how I acted like a damned fool and got us into this jam in the first place."

Doug explained the finding of the boat the evening before, and did his best to let Lou down easy on the blabbing end of it. He told how Papadous had left early, and how he had learned about the guns.

"So we got some, too, and came out to see what we could do about it," he wound up.

"Mr. Commander," said Leo, "that is a made-up story.—I am a responsible sponger, known all up and down the Florida coast. These fellows are a couple of cheap beach combers who

got hold of a boat some place, and have been causing trouble within the fleet ever since they set themselves up as sponge divers."

The commander looked from one to the other. It was plain that he didn't know which story to believe.

"I'D like to call your attention to our buoy, still marking the spot since last night," said Doug, quietly. "Red and yellow." He pointed to the ball, bouncing on the water, and then to the colors at his masthead.

"That buoy isn't fastened to the wreck," cut in Leo, quickly. "It was set out to mark a sponge bed."

"So-o-o?" said Doug. "Well, I'll just grab you by the back of the neck and drag you down there. I'll show you where it's tied."

"You won't lay your filthy hands on me," came back Leo, with a world of dignity which he no doubt hoped would impress the commander. "You're just dirt to me.—There!" He brought the palm of his hand a smacking blow on Doug's cheek.

It was all the two officers could do to hold Lou. For a surprised second, Doug looked into the Greek's handsome, sullen face. His own drained slowly white.

No matter what else Leo Papadous was, he was no coward. Yellow streaks have no place in the profession which he followed, and he had supreme confidence in the huge muscles that work had developed on his frame. He stood there with a half smile on his lips. The sun glinted from his long black hair, combed straight back from his forehead. His eyes glittered like wet onyx marbles.

He was ready for Doug's answering blow, and he met it with one driven by all the power of his heavy, well

muscled shoulders. The rapid exchange of sledge-hammer drives lasted only about a minute; but when they were pulled apart Leo's straight, classical nose was somewhat flattened and was flowing claret. A sudden bump the size of a half-walnut had appeared above one eye.

The commander must have figured that it was now time for him to lose his temper. He threatened to throw them all in the brig. Of course he didn't know the value of the prize which lay under the keel of the cutter, and he was acting according to his best judgment.

"I'm not setting up any court to decide questions of maritime law," he said, "but your story"—he spoke to Doug—"rings pretty true—especially so since it's bolstered up with the buoy bearing your colors. And as long as it's there, I would say that the privilege of working below is yours, without interference from this other boat. Without that buoy, it's any man's wreck."

He turned to Leo. "Your best bet, if you have a fair claim, is to get an injunction against this fellow and let the courts settle matters.—Let's see your papers."

He took Doug's, too, and after copying down the data he required, he returned them. He also took down the names of the members of both crews.

"I'm not going to beat it away and leave you fellows here to kill each other," he said. "I'm going to take all arms. You can recover them by properly identifying yourselves to the custodian of confiscated goods, at the base."

He sent men aboard to search both boats, then prepared to cast off.

"I can't stick around here all day," he said, "and I've got to catch a certain rum-runner before that storm

breaks." He pointed to the gathering storm clouds scudding down over the northern horizon. "Have any of you seen a big, stub-masted black schooner plying between the coast and the Bahamas?"

No one had, and the cutter raced off into the south to continue her search. Doug ordered the hook dropped, for the government boat had luckily dragged them into almost perfect position.

NOT a word was exchanged between the two sponge boats.

The four men who had received medical attention were now practically useless; and for his part, Leo wasn't taking any long chances. He had other plans.

Doug had just finished strapping on his thirty-pound lead soled shoes when Lou called his attention to a bubble slick on the surface, and a pulsing hose bent over the rail of the other boat. Leo was already down!

Milton lumbered over to the rail and waited for Lou to set his "hat." Bucko and Toby spat on their hands and stood in readiness at the pump. Doug made an air test, and then Lou set the helmet over his head and locked it into place. His hand dropped to his belt—the instinctive gesture of a diver just before he takes a dip—making certain that his knife is in place.

As the water closed over his head, Doug adjusted his valves, making himself heavy in order to descend more rapidly. Just before he hit the bottom he saw the slowly rising figure of the other diver. He was bringing up the loose end of the buoy line.

The other man's hose bent over far enough so that Doug managed to grasp it. He checked his own descent by letting the air pile up in his suit, then he

gave the other diver line two quick jerks. Immediately the topside answered the manual signal, slacking off instead of continuing to pull their man to the surface. Doug landed beside him, after releasing some of the air from his suit and following the lines down.

His first action was to tear the buoy cord from Leo's fingers. Then he shoved him out of the way, and once more bent the line to one of the anchor flukes pulled snugly up against the hawsepipe of the wreck. He had hardly completed the job when, through the green water, he caught the glint of shiny steel. With one hand the other was reaching for Doug's old hose line, while in the other he held a diver's sheath knife.

Doug tried to hurry, but at that depth everything was like slow motion pictures. He strained against the all-encompassing pressure until it seemed that he had no strength left. The crease across his ribs burned like the touch of a hot poker, hampering his movements.

Reaching out he grasped the hand that held the knife, just as the blade was ready to be drawn across the hose. Leo twisted his arm and shoved till the point of the blade touched Doug's suit.

Slowly, they came closer together; but there was no pressure behind the knife. The grip on the wrist was one of desperation, and it succeeded in holding the blade away. Doug knew that the sharp steel would cut through the rotten fabric of his old suit like a razor through tissue paper.

He slipped sideways, just enough to miss the blade, and they came together locked in one another's arms. A fouling of their lines tipped them over.

There on the white sand they rolled like wrestlers on a mat.

ONCE their helmets bumped together, and the hollow reverberation inside almost split Doug's eardrums. Then he felt a jet of water against the side of his head.

"That left-hand face port is loose again," was his thought.

Day after day he had nursed and petted this old outfit he was wearing, knowing that a severe bump on the helmet might be the end of him. Now he had to fight, and there was no way of preventing those bumps.

He felt the strength of Leo's hands as they tried to wrench the hose loose from the back of Doug's helmet. He rolled over onto his back, and the water that was fast leaking into his suit slopped up over his face, half strangling him. He raised up, and again their helmets came in contact. Through the metal he could hear the mumble of an inquiring voice, coming down from the deck far above. Doug had never been fortunate enough to own one of those new battery-less phone sets, with the wires running through the core of the lifeline, but he knew that Papadous had them rigged in his suits.

A new fear gripped Doug. What if there was another diver in Leo's outfit? What if Papadous had already called topside and told them of the fight—had ordered the other man to come down and help him? Doug might be able to hold his own with Leo, even in a leaky suit; but he could never hope to best two men.

He realized that desperate measures were necessary. There was no chance for him to get a hand to the knife at his belt, though he might be able to get a grip on Leo's hose. After another

couple of minutes of struggle, he managed it. It took all the strength he could send down to his fingers to get the stiff air conduit bent double. When his grip was right, he closed down, bending it so sharply that he closed off the small hole running through its center.

His own suit was fast filling. Still the other diver fought, and Doug hung on with cramped fingers. Soon Leo's efforts to free himself became noticeably weaker.

Doug knew that the dead air in Leo's helmet couldn't last long, and that soon the other would be unconscious. Doug kept glancing anxiously above, but no diver came down. He didn't know that the diver whom Papadous usually worked with when they were diving double was the one who had been most seriously injured in the exchange of gunfire, earlier.

When Leo went limp, Doug let a little air into the helmet and then gave four quick jerks on his own line. It was a hard job, unfouling the lines as they were brought up. At last, when he was free of his tangle with the other, he let him loose. The shapeless figure settled slowly back into the green depths, and Doug was pulled the few remaining feet to the surface.

As soon as his helmet was off, he called across to the tender at the rail of the other boat. "Better yank him out," he said. "You'll be there all night, if you wait for him to signal or tell you what's the matter. He needs fresh air—and lots of it!"

While he sat on a bitt and smoked, he watched the crew across the way pull their boss out, strip him of his suit, and try to bring him back to consciousness by splashing his face with water and briskly rubbing his wrists. He could tell by their attitudes,

when their efforts at last became successful.

A few minutes later, Papadous' motor kicked over and the rival sponge boat headed back for Balate.

CHAPTER IV.

A BATTLE FOR GOLD.

"**H**E'LL be back. Don't worry," said Doug. "That baby's got his mind set on grabbing off this gold.—Hand me that helmet, and I'll see if I can stop that leak around that left-hand face port."

"You aren't going down again, are you, after the abuse you just took down there?" asked Lou. "Wait till to-morrow."

"With that coming down on us?" Doug nodded toward the approaching storm. "I'm going down just as soon as I can. We haven't any way of taking an observation, and we haven't anything strong enough to float a buoy that'd hold in this coming storm. If we ever lost this spot, we mightn't find it again for months.—Maybe never."

"How about the anchor chain? That'd hold."

"And what would you float it with? —Not that little painted ball, I hope." Doug's teeth flashed in a grin that made Lou feel even more like a heel.

"If he'd only get mad once and knock me for a loop, I'd feel better about it," Lou told himself. "How about me going down, then?" he asked.

Doug shook his head. "Nope! You're a damned good skin diver, Lou; but you don't know anything about suits. Especially a rotten old rag like this one.—Nope! I'll do the diving. We've got time to look her over, anyway. Ain't noon yet, and that storm might just accidentally miss us."

Fifteen minutes later he was over again. This time taking with him a light sledge-hammer and two cold chisels. A boat carrying as much gold as the Portsmouth Belle must have a strong room, he figured.

A *strong* room it was, 'tween decks, just under the bridge. Rust and corrosion had eaten at the heavy steel door, but still it held firmly against his puny attacks. The power behind his hammer blows were spent before the tool struck. The weight of the water dragged at his arm, held it back so that there was little force behind his blows.

Finally the last of the hinge rivets gave way. He pried and pounded till there was room enough to enter, and by feeling, in the dark, he found that the room was stacked with small boxes that taxed his strength to lift. The rotten wood fell away under his blows, and with a couple of the heavy metal bars in his hands, he signaled to be hoisted.

The bars proved to be pure gold, all right; and when the salt water deposit had been wiped off, they were as bright and shiny as the day they were smelted and cast. Lou and Doug and the two blacks whooped it up there on the deck while the first breeze of the coming storm swept past. Bucko forgot his sore shoulder long enough to do a jig step; then he and Toby broke out into happy song.

THE other boats of the sponge fleet took warning from the scudding black clouds and turned about toward port. Doug hailed a small skin-diving outfit operated by two men. One of them he called Frank, and invited him and his partner aboard.

"How'd you like to make a thou-

sand dollars, between now and to-morrow noon, Frank?" he asked.

"Sure! Who do you want killed?—where'n hell would you be gettin' a thousand bucks?"

Doug showed him and explained. "We're going to try to ride out the storm to-night, so's not to lose this spot. What I want you to do is show up here at daylight, to-morrow, with four good rifles and a flock of ammunition. Be here when dawn breaks; but make the run out before that, if you see Leo Papadous or any of his crowd making arrangements to leave the dock.—That fair? One thousand bucks.—Only keep quiet about the whole thing till it's over."

Frank and his partner were more than willing. They'd be back, storm or no storm. They seemed to have a little doubt, though, about Doug and Lou's boat being able to ride out anything very serious.

"She will—or she'll sink," said Doug. "I don't think it's going to amount to much—mostly rain, with maybe a little wind. We're sticking, anyway." He turned to the two loyal blacks. "How about it, boys? Wanta go back with Frank, here, or will you stick with 'er till morning?"

The two blacks worshipped Doug. They'd stick, they said.

Frank and his partner shoved off, while Lou rigged up the little power winch and Doug made a sling that would hold a bullion box at a time. Doug dropped over the side again, and pretty soon the heavy boxes of gold began to come up, and were stacked like cordwood on the deck.

The storm clouds closed down, and they had to quit early. The wind increased, and the boat tugged mightily at her chain. Lou located the trouble in the main engine, and replaced a

magneto gear so that they would be ready in case it became necessary to cut loose.

Slow hours dragged by, and a stiff wind tossed them, the rain coming down in sheets. There was no sleep for any of them, and they talked of the attack which they knew Leo and his crew would launch in the morning.

"Ah'll die right here afore Ah'll let that there crook touch one bah of youah gol', boss," declared Bucko, and Toby was quick to echo his pal's sentiments.

Doug spent a troublesome fifteen minutes trying to figure out what he could do to show his appreciation to the two black boys, if things went off well. Money, he knew, was out of the question. They'd drown themselves in Everglade rum. He finally decided to put the sponge boat in good shape and turn it over to them.

The center of the storm passed, cutting the rain off short, and slowing the wind down. Still, it was a little too choppy for small boats to venture out from shore.

WHEN the first streaks of light appeared in the east, Doug climbed back into his suit. The others tried to dissuade him from making a dive, but he stuck to his original intention.

"We'll get that gold up and have it over with," he said. "Give me a signal the minute you sight anything coming out."

Stiff and aching, and with his side burning as though splashed with acid, he dropped over the rail. True to his prediction, the buoy had carried away; and when he reached bottom the wreck was nowhere in sight. Their little sponge boat had dragged her hook.

While Lou followed the bubble slick

on top, Doug traced the anchor marks on the white sand. It was some time before he was again in the strong room; and to make up for lost time, he worked like a Trojan.

He had been down almost an hour when his knee caught on a sharp projection. A jagged hole was ripped in the suit fabric, and though the suit was held tight against his leg, considerable water seeped in. Every bone in his body ached as he fought the tugs on his lines made by the surge and send of the sea. The boat was continually yawing, dragging him off his feet. Slamming him up against the rusted iron bulkheads.

Then an imperative signal came down the line. He cleared himself away, and answered. He noticed that Lou was taking him up exceptionally fast. The rapid decrease of pressure was raising havoc with his eardrums, and he could feel the froth of nitrogen bubbles running through his veins.

He pictured himself getting a nice case of the bends. Not because of the depth, but because of the length of time he had been down, and the rapid ascent. He'd had the dread caisson disease once, and he didn't relish the prospects of going through it again. These thoughts, however, were soon wiped from his mind as he wondered why Lou was in such a terrible hurry to get him up.

He tried to picture what he would see on top. Would he be looking into a gun in the hands of Leo Papadous? If so, it wouldn't be for long. Leo, he knew, would shoot him down like he would a dog.

A wave broke up against his helmet. He was out, with Lou hurriedly dragging him over the rail. His "hat" came off with a twist, and he looked out toward the coast to see the Papa-

dous boat churning its way toward them. Instinctively, he looked around for something to fight back with, and then he realized the foolishness of the idea. Frank and his partner had not shown up with the guns and ammunition.

Running, too, was out of the question. Leo's boat was much speedier. His eyes swept helplessly out over the water.

Suddenly his voice snapped out, "We've got one chance, Lou!—Get your engine idling.—Bucko, you and Toby get out of sight. Stay that way."

He took his place at the wheel. His eyes never leaving the other boat, he made out the watchful figure of Leo in the bow. There was a rifle balanced in his hands.

DOUg called to Lou for a little steerageway. Slowly he helmed her over so that she followed the other craft with her nose. The other engine stopped short, but the headway brought them up. Leo leaned the rifle against his leg and raised cupped hands to his lips.

"All right, you. Step out, or I'll blow the top of your head off. Step to the rail—all of you. With your hands up."

Doug paid no attention to the commands. In fact, he hardly knew what was said, so intent was he upon watching the relative positions of the two boats.

"Make it snappy," called Leo. "Don't think you can stall till Frank and his partner come. We fixed their engine, and took their guns."

Doug drew his bow over a little, steadied her. "Give her the works, Lou.—She's got to take it," he shouted.

The exhaust barked with the open throttle. The old schooner trembled

from stem to stern, hardly moved. Then the steep-pitched wheel took hold. She gathered momentum rapidly.

Papadous and his gang were taken completely by surprise. They had heard Doug tell the cutter commander that his boat was crippled. It hadn't occurred to them that it might have been repaired. Now, as they saw the trick, it was too late to correct their error.

Some of the men gave voice to terror-stricken shouts. The engineman tried desperately to get started, but the first flip-over was a backfire.

Leo raised his rifle and fired. One of the bullets whizzed past close to Doug's head, and the other nicked his sleeve, but they didn't wipe the wide grin from his face. It wasn't a grin denoting mirth; it was something entirely different—more like the savage, snarling grin of a man who is driven momentarily insane by desperation.

The two bullets were all that came, however, for the echo of them had not died out till there was a rending, splintering crash. The bow of Doug's boat had cut straight into the other craft, amidships. Men were thrown sprawling into the water, their guns forgotten in the confusion.

"Good old boat!" shouted Doug. "She stood it, Lou!—She stood it!" He left the wheel and joined his partner. "Get a couple of boat hooks and some pieces of line," he called to the black boys.

While he was waiting for them to do his bidding, he watched the men in the water, clawing for a hold on the smooth sides. Lou had returned to his engine for a moment.

It was Bucko's bellow of warning that whipped Doug around just in time to meet Leo's attack. Papadous had mounted the anchor chain and slid

over the rail. They met on the open deck. The thud of their hard fists could be heard above the shouting of the men in the water. Toe to toe they stood. Cable-strong muscles whipped and snapped.

Slowly but surely, Papadous was being beaten down. He tried to clinch, but Doug kept away from him.—One-two! Right-left! Every blow left its mark, and hammered the Greek crook closer to the deck. At last his legs buckled. He gave up trying to strike back or even to protect himself. He clasped his arms around Doug's knees, and took everything his opponent cared to give him.

CHAPTER V.

A SKIN DIVE.

TWO hours later a bright sun erased the tail end of the passing storm clouds. Leo and all his men lay stretched out on the deck, with feet and hands tied.

The hose was once more over the rail, and Bucko and Toby labored on the old air pump. Perspiration streamed from them, and their bare torsos glistened like wet ebony in the sunlight. Each wore a wide, white-toothed grin; and except for the two bandages, one would never have guessed that both were wounded.

Lou fished Doug's lines, but there was a worried frown on his tanned face. It had been ten minutes now since a box had come up, and the bubbles weren't breaking regularly. What was more important, there were no answers to his repeated signals.

He wheeled to the blacks. "Bucko, do you think you could handle that pump alone for a few minutes?"

It was a full-sized two-man job, but

Bucko never hesitated a second. "You bet Ah can, boss."

"Okay. Then Toby you fish these lines.—Easy with 'em, too. That bubble slick is getting too spasmodic for me."

By the time Lou had finished speaking, he was out of his clothes. He looked around quickly, then picked up a heavy brass engine bushing. He threaded a piece of mousing through the oil hole, and held it out for Toby to tie around his right wrist.

Toby's eyes were wide with surprise. "You ain't gonna skin dive down intuh that there boat?—Why, man alive—!" He was so concerned over his discovery of Lou's intention that he couldn't finish the sentence.

"That's just what I'm going to do. —Hurry!"

Lou whipped a long knife from the sheath that clung to the belt of his discarded trousers. The next instant he was poised upon the rail, and then he was disappearing into the green waters.

"Ain't no man livin' can skin dive intuh a boat that deep an' evah git out agin!" Toby shook his black head.

"He kin," puffed Bucko, conserving his breath for the back-breaking task of keeping Doug's air pressure up.

If Lou, as he was dragged down by the weight on his wrist, could have heard Bucko's words, he might have been inclined to argue. He wasn't at all certain that he could get to that strong room and out again, much less help Doug out of the trouble he was in. He was all for trying, though. All the trouble they'd got into was due to Lou's foolishness—perhaps here would be a chance to square things up a little.

He followed Doug's lines, but by the time he was inside the boat, his lungs

felt as though they would burst. He'd known men who could stay under three minutes. He'd never tried it that long himself, but he knew he was going to have to go the limit this trip—maybe beyond.

BEFORE he reached his partner he found the trouble. The door to the strong room, swinging on its locked bar since the hinges had been cut, had closed on Doug's house, probably dragging him off his feet or swinging him into some position making it impossible for him to help himself.

Lou gripped the rusted steel deck with his toes, and tried to push the door back. His eardrums were breaking, and his lungs were afire. He let a dribble of air out through his nostrils, but that afforded him small relief. Once more, he threw what little strength he had left against the iron portal. It gave an inch, caught, held for a moment, then swung in enough to permit Doug's twenty-two-inch helmet to pass through.

Lou pulled on the lines. Doug's shadowy hulk appeared. Lou was on his feet; he could feel the vibrant clang of the lead soles on the iron deck.

Then every muscle in Lou's body seemed to go dead at once. The knife fell from his hand. He stooped over to pick it up, and reddish flames flickered before his eyes. He didn't mean to let it out, but a big bubble of air slipped past his lips. He tried to reach the mousing around his wrist with the knife point—everything went black.

Doug was conscious and capable of movement, but that was about all. He was getting only about half the air he needed. The rest was escaping around one of the repair clamps on the hose. He fully understood what

Lou had done, however, and realized the predicament they were both in now. He caught the grotesquely swaying body of his partner under one arm, using the free hand to clear his lines as he followed them out to the deck.

He knew what he was going to do even before he was out. If he turned Lou loose, he would rise to the surface, but he was unconscious, and there would be no one to lift him from the water. He might even come up on the wrong side of the boat and not be seen at all.

On the other hand, Doug could close off the valve and inflate his suit. Perhaps the old bag would stand it; if it did, well and good. He'd carry Lou up with him on the fast ascent. If the suit didn't stand it—well . . .

He closed the valve and felt his rubber covering slowly pull away from against his body. He lifted to his toes; left the deck, gathering speed. Holding Lou clasped in his arms, he prayed that they wouldn't come up under the schooner's keel. They would be traveling fast as the suit continued to inflate and the water pressure decreased.

IT was the middle of the afternoon before Doug was capable of taking another dip. This time he was only down a matter of twenty minutes, and during that time the strong room was completely cleaned out.

Lou, still a little shaky and rather white around the gills, greeted him with a cheer as he came up for the last time. He got the suit diver out of

his suit as quickly as possible, and they pointed the nose of their boat for Balate.

It was an odd deckload that the old schooner carried. Rotted boxes of gold had broken open, and the sun glinted richly from the yellow metal that lay scattered about. In the middle of the very wealth which he had tried to steal lay Leo Papadous, dark anger showing through his recent bruises. His crew were probably sharing his thoughts.

Lou took a long drag at his cigarette, and smiled at Doug. "I'll never take another drink of *moustika* as long as I live. Look at the jam I got you into—just on account of that damned stuff."

Doug draped an arm over the husky shoulders of his partner, and his face split into a wide smile. "Forget it!" he said. "Think about the jam you got me out of this morning, buddy!"

"Yeah!" snorted Lou. "And then you turn right around and steal my thunder by saving me."

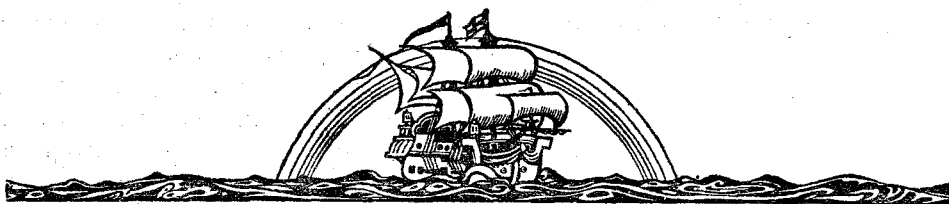
There was a faint clatter of ivory on wood.

"Betcha two more bricks Ah eights!" It was Bucko's voice that drew the eyes of the white men to the only uncluttered place on the deck.

"Called!" piped out Toby, and stopped the dice on the next roll. Ten big chunks of gold lay between them.

When Bucko went to blow on the cubes his eyes met those of Doug. "We's jest funnin', boss," he grinned. "We ain't playin' fer keeps."

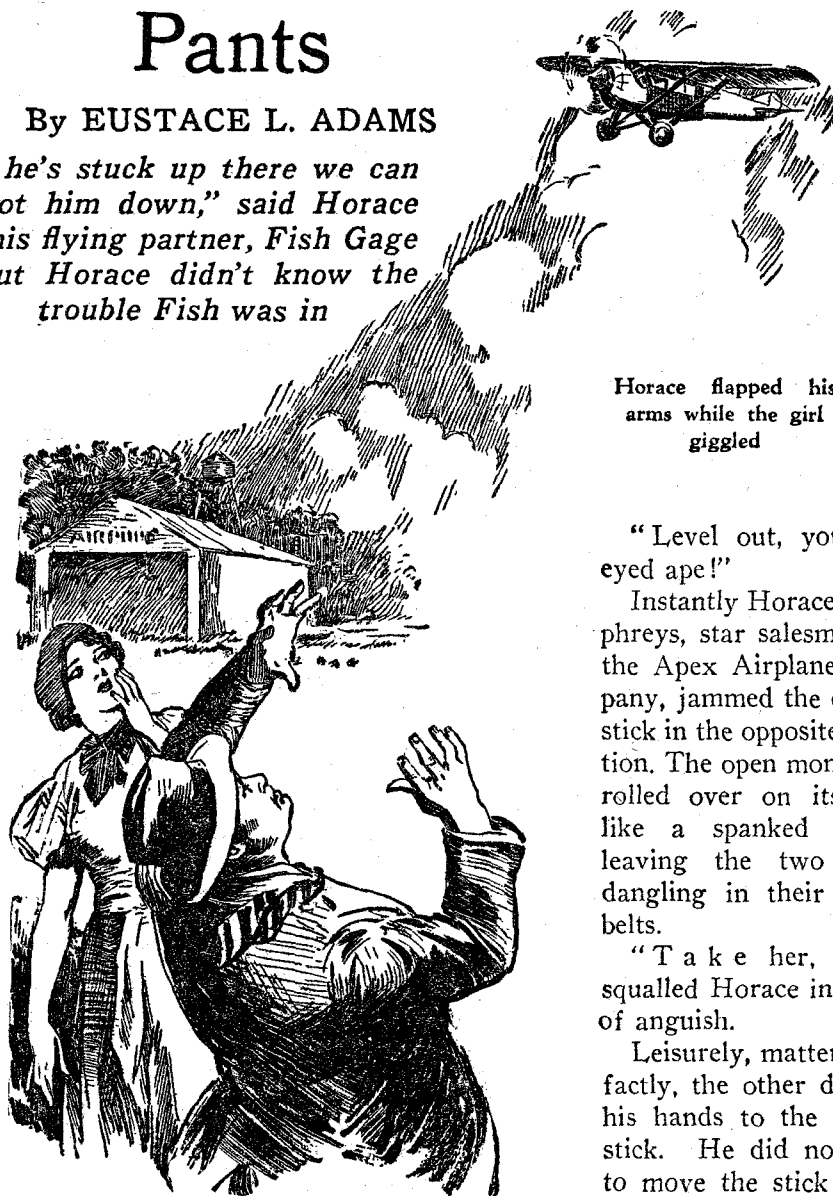
THE END.



Pants

By EUSTACE L. ADAMS

"If he's stuck up there we can shoot him down," said Horace of his flying partner, Fish Gage—but Horace didn't know the trouble Fish was in



Horace flapped his arms while the girl giggled

"Level out, you bug-eyed ape!"

Instantly Horace Humphreys, star salesman for the Apex Airplane Company, jammed the control stick in the opposite direction. The open monoplane rolled over on its back like a spanked puppy, leaving the two flyers dangling in their safety belts.

"Take her, Fish!" squalled Horace in a tone of anguish.

Leisurely, matter-of-factly, the other dropped his hands to the control stick. He did not seem to move the stick at all, yet the plane, as if recog-

nizing its master's hand, docilely rolled over to its proper position in the air and headed straight toward the airport, just visible on the horizon.

The fat young salesman swallowed his heart, wiped beads of perspiration from the thick lenses of his goggles and glanced sheepishly at the crash-scarred face of his companion.

FISH GAGE watched the horizon tilt to an angle of twenty degrees. With an expression of wondering incredulity upon his battered countenance, he turned a hard gray eye upon the earnest young man who sat beside him. Then, in a voice which caused the pointer on the altimeter to jump a thousand feet:

"Funny how I can't get the hang of flying, isn't it, Fish?" he ventured.

"An airplane salesman who can't learn to fly!" retorted Fish Gage, chief demonstrator for the Apex Company. "And yet you got the nerve to tell prospects that flying's a cinch! You ought to take to selling haberdashery!"

"I don't have to know how to fly!" replied Horace, heatedly. "You can pry up any old board and a couple of pilots will come crawling out! But find me a couple of birds who can sell planes like I can."

"Yeah? Well, try selling 'em without me to demonstrate 'em, that's all I say."

Even in his present jaundiced mood, the stout young salesman was forced to admit that Fish's claims were based upon reason. While Fish was not what even a doting mother might have called handsome, he had a way with airplanes that was like unto the way of a born horseman with his mount. True, more than once during his uncounted hours in the air, his flying steeds had turned to rend him.

That sizeable dent on the bridge of his prominent nose dated from the early weeks of Contract Air Route No. 1, when, halfway between Chicago and St. Louis, his plane, an ancient Army De Haviland, had disintegrated like the One Horse Shay. And those shockingly white china molars: Fish insisted they had become necessary when a 30-day lieutenant had spun him into the ground at Kelly Field.

But if Fish Gage was not exactly a treat for more critical eyes, and if he possessed a regrettable fondness for liquor in its most potent form, he had his virtues. When designers entertained serious uncertainties as to the airworthiness of one of their brain children, it was Fish Gage who non-

chalantly took the new ship on her first test flight.

Even the Department of Commerce inspectors, than whom no more critical race of men exists, spoke in tones of reverence of his flying ability, at the same time making plans to ground him for flying while unduly exhilarated. He was, they insisted, living refutation of the axiom that every flyer owned only a certain amount of luck.

"WHAT are we going to do with this bird who's waiting for us?" Fish now asked his companion, who was sitting in brooding silence beside him.

"The sale is in the bag!" declared Horace, brightening.

"Good!" exclaimed Fish. "Let's start to celebrate now!"

So saying, he reached into the locker behind the instrument board and produced a gigantic flask. But Horace's action was equally prompt. His hand disappeared into the pocket in the cockpit wall and when it reappeared, it grasped a sizeable end wrench.

"Just take one tiny hoot out of that," he said with cold ferocity, "and you'll be wearing a silver cover over your think tank!"

"And how would you get down to the ground?" asked Fish, tentatively. "There'd be arms and legs and ribs all over a five acre airport after you'd made your landing."

"They'd be yours," asserted Horace with such earnestness that Fish was perforce convinced.

Reluctantly he replaced the quart-sized flask in its accustomed place and nursed his prodigious thirst in melancholy silence. Presently, when the near edge of the approaching airport appeared beneath the lower cylinder of the radial engine, he cut his throttle

and began a long, easy glide toward the tarmac, where Mr. Gluck, of Gluck's Chewing Gum, Inc., would be waiting to appraise the merits of the Apex Sport Plane as an advertising medium.

"While I talk to Mr. Gluck," said Horace, "you just fly around a bit, showing him what the job will do in the air. Maybe ten minutes, see? Then, when I get him all of a twitter to buy, you take him up for a little ride. After that, it'll be just a case of cashing our commission check and dividing it."

Fish maintained his sulky, thirsty silence. Horace, studying his face, felt impelled to issue a further warning.

"And listen, you flying tank, if I even smell a trace of Hennessy's Four Star on your breath when you come down, I'll call up the nearest Department of Commerce man and tell him who it was that looped the Brooklyn Bridge and played drop the handkerchief with the mooring mast on the Empire State Building, see?"

"You'd blackmail a pal, and get his ticket taken away?" asked Fish reproachfully.

"With loud cries of pleasure, if you go dizzy on this sale!" snapped Horace venomously.

The airport was typical of a thousand others built by ambitious small towns during the lush days of aviation which followed Lindbergh's flight to Paris. There was a single shabby hangar, with two or three small planes housed inside. A somnolent attendant drowsed beside a portable gasoline tank. There was a rough field, upon which the coarse grass grew ankle-deep. But Fish Gage had served his apprenticeship when two-acre cow pastures were regarded as airports de luxe. He set wheels and tail skid to earth in the smoothest of landings.

A limousine waited near the hangar

door. As the Apex rolled to a full stop, the motor car moved up beside it. Horace Humphreys, easing his stoutish form out of the double cockpit, clambered awkwardly to the ground.

FISH GAGE, gazing gloomily over the cowl, started convulsively.

From the dim interior of the limousine there stepped a man and two women. Or, to be more exact, a woman and a girl.

"I knew it!" Fish muttered with profound pessimism. "My luck's been too good lately. If I have to demonstrate to a girl I might as well get primed!"

While Horace greeted the trio with professional enthusiasm, Fish screeged down until he was sitting upon his spine at a point mid-way between belt and collar. Screened by the cockpit wall, he reached into the locker, deftly unscrewed the cap of the silver flask and helped himself to a generous draught of Hennessy's Four Star. He coughed and choked. But when he again sat up straight there was a new light in his eyes and an expression of peace upon his hard-bitten face.

"—so glad to meet you, Mr. Gluck," Horace was purring. "How do you do, Mrs. Gluck. Delighted, Miss Gluck! We got your letter and hurried right over to show you how an Apex Sport Plane might carry your message to millions of consumers. This," he added expansively, with a wave of his hand toward the cockpit, "is Mr. Gage, our chief demonstrator, and one of the oldest, most experienced flyers in the world."

"Have some gum?" asked Mr. Gluck, producing a packet from a bulging pocket of his cream-colored pongee jacket. "It's our newest flavor, 'Six-fruit'!"

Dutifully Horace accepted a slice. Mr. Gluck proffered the packet toward Fish.

"Have a piece?" he invited cordially.

"Nuh-huh," said Fish, suspiciously, "it always gets under my plate."

Mr. Gluck blinked. Mrs. Gluck rolled a cold eye up at the pilot. Miss Gluck, staring at Fish with an incredulous expression upon her lovely oval face, laughed.

"I knew they couldn't be his own, mama!" she said, breathlessly. "I never saw any so white and so shining in my life."

Fish's inflamed glance rested briefly upon her, then his entire head sank slowly out of sight behind the cowling. Within Fish's long experience, no luck had ever come with having girls in or around an airplane. With a shudder of inward distress he remembered a girl racer who had cut off his flippers with her propeller at the Portland races. He remembered a cargo of beauty contest winners, with whom he had made a forced landing in the Florida scrub. To wash these horrid thoughts from his memory, he reached hastily for the flask.

"—and when we fasten a large Neon sign to the lower wing, Mr. Gluck," Horace's voice was going on, "the plane may be flown over one big city after another—"

Fish shuddered. Having heard Horace's sales talk dozens of times he had no wish to hear it again. He took another drink. Then, since he could still hear it, he took another. Now he found himself remembering not only Miss Gluck, but Mrs. Gluck as well.

She was, he decided, a terrible woman. He remembered that she was large and masterful, with a mustang eye and the beginning of a fine mus-

tache. If she were to take a flight, he decided, she would take the joystick and, when he protested, she would undoubtedly grab Horace's end wrench and split his head wide open. He found himself feeling very sorry for himself. Sorry, too, for Mr. Gluck, who was a mild person with inoffensive blue eyes and a disarming smile.

"OH, Mr. Gage!" came Horace's voice from below. It had that salesman's timbre to it, that earnest confident tone that never failed to cause Fish's hair to rise on the back of his neck. Always, when Horace used that unctuous voice, unpleasant things were about to happen.

Slowly, cautiously, Fish pushed his face up over the cowling and stared down at Horace.

"We've changed our plans," said Horace. "If you'll take Mr. Gluck up for just a little—"

"I've changed mine, too," said Mrs. Gluck, surveying Fish intently. "There's something about that man up there I don't trust. Mr. Humphreys, you may take Pericles up if you wish."

"Pericles?" Fish did not even know he had spoken, yet his voice was like that of a train announcer.

"Pericles!" stated Mrs. Gluck, eyeing Fish with cold distaste.

"I'd be delighted," said Horace, quickly, "but the fact is that I sprained my wrist the other day and—" He turned quickly and bent a scowl upon the thoughtful Fish. "You go up alone, Mr. Gage," he said crisply. "Five minutes, say, and when you come down—"

Fish waited no longer. He gave the engine full throttle. With a feeling of grateful release in his heart he held the ship down until she had gathered speed, then pulled up and away in a

zoom that caused Horace, on the ground below, to hold his breath for a dozen long, long seconds.

Climbing high into the bright sky, the pilot began to put the monoplane through her paces for the edification of the Gluck family, some three thousand feet below. It was always good to be in the air, far from all earth-borne troubles.

Particularly so this afternoon when, despite the three drinks of Hennessy's Four Star, Fish was feeling very low in his mind.

Last night, while immoderately uplifted by the same potent liquor, Fish had attended a reunion of veterans of the air mail service, most of whom were as exhilarated as he. Having wept copiously now and then at some reference to "the good old days," Fish had been moved to resent a suggestion that Curtiss had done more for aviation than the brothers Wright.

One thing leading to another, the reunion had ended in a joyous brawl, during which Fish had somehow mislaid his most recent set of twelve-dollar teeth.

So to-day, besides having a head that reverberated like a temple gong, Fish was engaged in the all-too-frequent task of becoming accustomed to a new set of teeth. Despite the fact that they were more expensive by two dollars than the past set, they fitted none too well. And what, with this and that and all the troubles he had, Fish considered that the world was not treating him fairly.

Up and around, over and up again. One at a time Fish put the little monoplane through her bag of tricks. Presently, finding the burden of comparative sobriety unbearable, he reached for his flask, sighted the bottom against the sky and helped himself to a shot

that, he felt, would make everything all right again.

It was exactly at this point that disaster happened. Somehow, as he held the uptilted flask in the hurricane of wind that beat back from the propeller, the thing slipped out of his hand. It landed in his lap, gurgling merrily as the precious liquor gushed out of the open neck.

Quickly he grabbed it, but it was too late to prevent catastrophe. His gray flannel trousers looked as if they had been dipped in a vat of Hennessy's Four Star. Squirming uncomfortably as the liquid percolated through to his bare skin, Fish surveyed his ravaged trousers with dismay. The scent of the liquor was appalling.

"I smell like a distillery!" he murmured, aghast. "What'll Horace do when he sees this? He'll crown me Queen of the May, that's what he'll do. And if we lose this sale on account of it, maybe he *will* report me to the Department inspectors!"

Steering in huge, absent-minded circles over the field, he searched his slightly-befuddled brain for some way to conceal the telltale stains. He tried to imagine landing and having to get out of the plane to stand inspection by the flapper and her truculent mother. At the mere thought of such a calamity he remembered the flask, which he still held rigidly in his right hand. He drained the scanty contents and restored the empty container to the locker.

Cheered and refreshed, he pushed his face out into the windstream to reduce his temperature, which had risen precipitously when he remembered Mrs. and Miss Gluck. And then, suddenly, as the hurricane of wind swept around his face, the answer came to

him. That wind, he decided, would dry all traces of the alcohol in five minutes. It would completely remove the odor, too. Conscience clear and immaculate of dress, he could then descend and face whatever might come next. Selah!

Allowing the plane to fly herself, he removed his hand from the joystick, unbuckled his belt and laboriously eased himself out of his moist trousers. He lifted them carefully over his head and allowed the wind to race along their snapping fabric. They whipped and fluttered in the gale, exerting a pull upon his uplifted arm that soon became a burden. But that, he decided, could be remedied very easily. Gently he drew them down to the cowl and began to make the belt fast to the upper longeron, so he might fly at his ease until the cleansing wind finished its task.

He was just slipping the end of the belt through the buckle when the wind happened to enter the waist band of the trousers, which instantly bellied and pulled out of his grasp. Frenziedly he grabbed at them, but he was just a split-second too late. Ballooning roundly in the wind, they shot rearward, collapsed against the stabilizer and, to his infinite horror, slipped off and zigzagged downward through the smiling sky.

The monoplane swiveled around on her right wing tip as Fish hauled over to follow the escaping trousers. For one desperate moment he considered diving at them with the hope of catching them in mid-air. But no, the penalty for a slight error of judgment would be a broken propeller, or worse.

He entertained a wild hope that they might land upon the farther end of the airport, where he might retrieve them before Horace, Mr. Gluck and

the women saw him. But he could see that they were being wafted upon a gentle wind which would inevitably carry them down into the center of the little town which sprawled along the eastern edge of the airport.

It occurred to him to head straight back to Mineola, leaving Horace to make the best apologies he could to the assembled Glucks. But even through his thick fog of unhappiness it was easy to see that he could not improve his lot by landing upon the more populous home field. He could imagine the ribald cheers from his brother pilots as he stalked, with what dignity he could gather, from plane to hangar.

There was, he decided, no sense in landing anywhere until he could think up a plan. So he just flew ahead and around, cutting a huge elliptical groove in the sky while he considered his melancholy situation.

AND we could furnish you a pilot," Horace was saying, as he followed the circling flight of the Apex with an impatient eye, "who could fly over one city after another by night, flashing your message in bright red letters to—"

"We've got to be going, Pericles," said Mrs. Gluck, for the fifth time in the past hour. "Why doesn't the young man come down?"

Horace's sales instinct was all that saved him from a tart retort. He, no less than the prospects, had grown very weary of waiting for Fish to descend. For thousands and thousands of years, it seemed to him, he had been talking to take their minds away from the fact that Fish should have been down long before now. Stealing a furtive glance at his wrist watch, he discovered that it had actually been one hour and thirty-four minutes—or was it years?

—since he had requested the triple-damned Fish to fly for the briefest of demonstrations.

"Maybe," said Miss Gluck, brightly, "he's stuck up there and he can't get down."

"Cheer up," said Horace, with a false smile, "we can always shoot him down."

He had already, in these ghastly hundred-odd minutes, described the virtues of the Apex Sport Monoplane until he, himself, almost gagged when he mentioned the name "Apex." Now he realized that he was balanced upon the thin cutting edge of talking himself first in, then out, of a sale.

"I think," said Mrs. Gluck, chewing her Six-fruit gum with loud, snapping noises, "that we may concede the plane will fly. Young man, kindly call your toothy friend down."

Horace stepped out onto the field and made ineffectual and slightly ridiculous flapping motions with his arms, but the droning plane overhead continued upon her slow, steady circling of the field. Horace flapped again. Miss Gluck giggled softly.

"Maybe you should crow!" she said helpfully.

"Orchid!" said her mother, sternly.

"In five minutes," said Mr. Gluck, his jaws moving rhythmically, "we will go home."

Once more Horace made futile gestures at the circling plane, but if Fish observed, or heard, the summons, he made no sign.

Mr. Gluck's mild blue eyes grew wistful.

"That's the kind of a plane I could fly, mama," he said, hopefully.

Beneath the beginnings of a luxuriant mustache, Mrs. Gluck's thin lips tightened.

"Perhaps you could learn to be a

tight-rope dancer, too?" she said sardonically.

Mr. Gluck crimsoned. Horace, always tactful, rushed into the breach.

"Of course he could learn to fly it, Mrs. Gluck," he said, earnestly. "He could learn in five—"

He stopped abruptly. The girl had caught his eye and had pressed one finger against her crimson lips in an unmistakable command for silence.

"If I catch the little squid even trying to learn," said Mrs. Gluck in a voice so venomous that Horace felt icy shivers race up and down his backbone, "I'll make him wish he never saw even a toy kite!"

"Mama!" Mr. Gluck protested uneasily. For a long moment the only sounds that could be heard were the droning of Fish's engine and the staccato popping of Mrs. Gluck's gum.

BUT at that precise moment one of these sounds came to an abrupt end. Two thousand feet above the airport, Fish's engine coughed, backfired, then became silent. Horace, brightening perceptibly, saw the plane's bow dip as Fish nosed down into a long spiral glide to the field.

"Now watch, Mr. Gluck," he said, feeling much better, "and you'll see what a slow landing speed she has. That's always important in a plane. If you'll step this way you may have your demonstration flight."

"If you as much touch the steering rope, or whatever the thing uses," said Mrs. Gluck, firmly, "you needn't bother to come down. You can stay up there till you starve to death."

"Now, mama!" protested Mr. Gluck, but there was a sly gleam in his meek blue eyes.

Horace worked efficiently. Knowing that Fish had undoubtedly run out

of gas, he summoned the hangar attendant, who began to roll his portable gas tank across the rutted turf. And when the silent Apex lurched to a stop fifty feet away from the hangar door, Horace and Mr. Gluck were there to meet it. Horace sidled to the cockpit and glared up at the pilot's face.

"You're a great big help to me, aren't you?" he snarled. "Two minutes more and you'd have lost the sale, you flap-eared half-wit!"

Fish's face was the color of bright red flannel. He opened his mouth to reply, but Miss Gluck, who had hurried across the tarmac, arrived beside the plane and Fish's mouth closed like a mouse trap.

"Get out of there and help the man put gas in," Horace said furiously. "Think we can stay here all night?"

Surprisingly, Fish was not in the least apologetic. Instead he was stubborn, even rebellious.

"Let him put it in himself," he said, glancing nervously at Miss Gluck. "That's what he's paid for. I'm not getting out of this cockpit."

"It'll be just a minute, Mr. Gluck," said Horace, casting a murderous glance at the crimsoned pilot. "Then he'll be ready."

"The plane ain't acting very well," said Fish, feebly.

"You'll have to excuse Mr. Gage, Mr. Gluck," said Horace, loudly, to drown out any further bleats from the pilot. "What is perfect to most of us is imperfect to him, he is so used to flying our wonderful Apex ships!"

"I think I'll take a ride with papa," said Miss Gluck, beaming coyly at Fish.

"Sorry, Miss Kluck," said the unhappy pilot, "but—"

"Gluck's the name," snapped Horace. "Gluck's Gum!"

"There are some adjustments I got to make," Fish went on, glancing beneath the cowl and reddening to even deeper shades of scarlet. "Maybe some other day—"

"If she'd like a ride," said Horace, coldly, "we'd be delighted to—"

A wild look appeared on Fish's face. He stared at Mr. Gluck, seeming to weigh and measure the man as he stood.

"All right, I'll take you, Mr. Kluck," he said, "and—"

"Gluck! Gluck!" said Horace.

"Aw, go lay an egg, now you're cackling!" snapped Fish. "I'll take the gentleman up first," he continued, glancing to see that the gas boy had finished his work, "and then maybe I'll take the girl. And that's my last word, see?"

HORACE, flushed with rage, sniffed suspiciously in Fish's general vicinity. But the pilot, strange as was his mood of the moment, was not tainted by any distinguishable odor of liquor, although Horace suspected that he was deliberately blowing his breath in the other direction. Still, open rebellion was in the air and Horace decided to make the best of a bad situation.

"Fair enough," he said, shortly. "Mr. Gluck, you fly first. Then, if your daughter would like a hop—"

"Get away from the horse's head!" snapped Fish, ungraciously.

He jerked at the compressed air starter. The propeller kicked over in short, jerky arcs, then disappeared in a metallic disk as the engine took hold. Horace boosted Mr. Gluck into the stirrup, pushed him up over the cowl. The monoplane lurched ahead before the prospect was more than halfway into his seat. A short dash

across the uneven grass and the plane leaped into the air like a startled quail.

"I like that pilot," said Mrs. Gluck unexpectedly. "He's the first man who hasn't yessed my husband since I can remember. Good for Pericles, it will be, for somebody to say no to him. I—"

But Horace had ceased to listen. There was something very queer about the way Fish was flying. Usually, upon such a demonstration hop, it was Fish's custom to level out at a thousand feet and to fly very conservatively around and around the airport.

Now, however, the little ship was slanting upward, reaching higher and higher into the afternoon sky.

Suddenly Horace's heart missed a dozen beats. The right wing of the monoplane drooped queerly. The bow lifted in an oddly askew movement. Then the ship snapped downward in the beginning of a vicious spin. After two complete revolutions the Apex straightened out of the spin, nosed up from the resulting dive and flew straight ahead upon a course that took her almost out of sight of the anxious watchers on the field.

"I'll bet papa swallowed his gum," said Miss Gluck, hopefully.

"Listen, young man," came the grim voice of her mother, "do you suppose that rabbit-toothed pilot is teaching my husband to fly?"

Horace grinned, although his cheek muscles felt like dried leather, so great was the effort.

"I think he was just showing your husband how the ship flew in different positions," he replied with an assurance he was far from feeling.

Now the plane was skidding badly. She staggered in the air, almost slipped off into another spin and then slowly righted herself. Horace's spirits

drooped until they touched rock bottom.

THE ship was falling! No, she was leveling off and climbing again. Horace, remembering the flask of Hennessy's Four Star, groaned inwardly and wondered if, perchance, Mr. Gluck was the owner of a thirst like Fish's.

A sharp elbow was digging into his side. Horace looked away from the plane to find that Miss Gluck was unmistakably motioning for him to step away from her mother. Wondering, Horace obeyed.

"Listen, Mr. Humphreys," the girl said with a wary eye upon her mother, "do you want to sell that plane?"

"Do I?" echoed Horace, now definitely interested.

"Well, do you know who's president of Gluck's Chewing Gum?"

"Sure. Your father."

"No. It's mother. She used to make the gum in a big kettle. She's B. C. Gluck, President and Treasurer. Papa is just—well, he sort of helps around."

Horace's mind reeled. A thousand feet above his head, the monoplane was returning in a series of long, queer zigzags. And the girl was upsetting all of his calculations.

"Why is he taking the demonstrations, then?" he demanded.

"The thing of it is that papa has been squelched so long, he wants to be a flyer to show mama he's really somebody. She says it's his last burst of boyish enthusiasm. Now, listen, it was mama's idea to buy the plane, but now I'm sure she won't. She's really awfully fond of papa, you know, in spite of what she says and does. She's afraid he might hurt himself. If your friend lets papa fly the plane, or even

makes him enjoy flying, I know mama won't buy a plane. I'm afraid you lost your sale when papa got into that cockpit."

"Well, I'm a Hawaiian hula dancer!" breathed Horace. "If he likes it, we're sunk. If he doesn't, we're sunk."

"Look!" yelled Mrs. Gluck, pointing up at the plane. "Look! What's that? Something tearing off?"

Horace looked along the line of her pointing arm. Something white had suddenly shot backward from the plane and was now floating down through the air astern. Horace's dazed eyes tried to make out what it was that had come loose, but he could not see it clearly. He waited through a dozen endless seconds to see if the wing might tear off and follow that floating something through the air. The Apex was rocking like a canoe in a heavy sea, but she did not fall. She darted down after the bit of white fabric, then turned away, still acting as if she had suddenly run amuck there in the bright afternoon sky.

Horace sat down, weakly. He dared not look up any longer. Things had somehow passed out of his hands and fate must now take its course.

"They're coming down, now," said the flapper.

Horace heard the snarl of the engine die to a muffled splutter. He heard the soft singing of the wind through wires.

The plane was drawing alongside. Horace and the two women hurried toward the cockpit where Fish and Mr. Gluck were seated in sultry, unfriendly, silence. Their faces were both bright scarlet. Fish was tenderly nursing a purpling bruise over his left eye and carefully avoided Horace's accusing stare.

"Come out of that, Pericles," said

Mrs. Gluck, coldly. "We're going home now."

"Go away!" said Fish, flatly.

Mrs. Gluck advanced upon the ship with the light of battle in her eye.

"Out, I said!" she said ominously.

Convulsively Fish and Mr. Gluck rose and scrambled out—over the opposite wall of the cockpit. The three observers beheld a shocking sight. Beneath Mr. Gluck's pongee jacket were a pair of chaste white shorts, below which protruded two spindling, bony legs. Fish's shorts blazed horridly in the bright sunlight, being of a violent shade of purple that clashed noisily with the green garters which held up his orange sox.

With one bare leg over the padded edge of the cowling, Mr. Gluck hesitated and turned a stormy face toward his spouse.

"He—he—" Mr. Gluck stammered, pointing at the scarlet-faced Fish, "—he didn't have any pants on and he stole mine! And the wind snatched them out of his hand! If—if I ever so much as look at another plane, I hope you shoot me!"

He and Fish dropped to the ground. With immense dignity they stalked toward the hangar. Mrs. Gluck's gargantuan laughter shattered the peace of the bright afternoon. As if kicked from behind, Fish and Mr. Gluck leaped forward and raced for the grateful dimness of the hangar like greyhounds after an electric rabbit. In two seconds they had skidded around the hangar door and were lost within the shadows inside.

"Young man," said Mrs. Gluck, panting, "I think that's taken the play out of Pericles. Have you an order blank? I'll give you a check for the plane!"

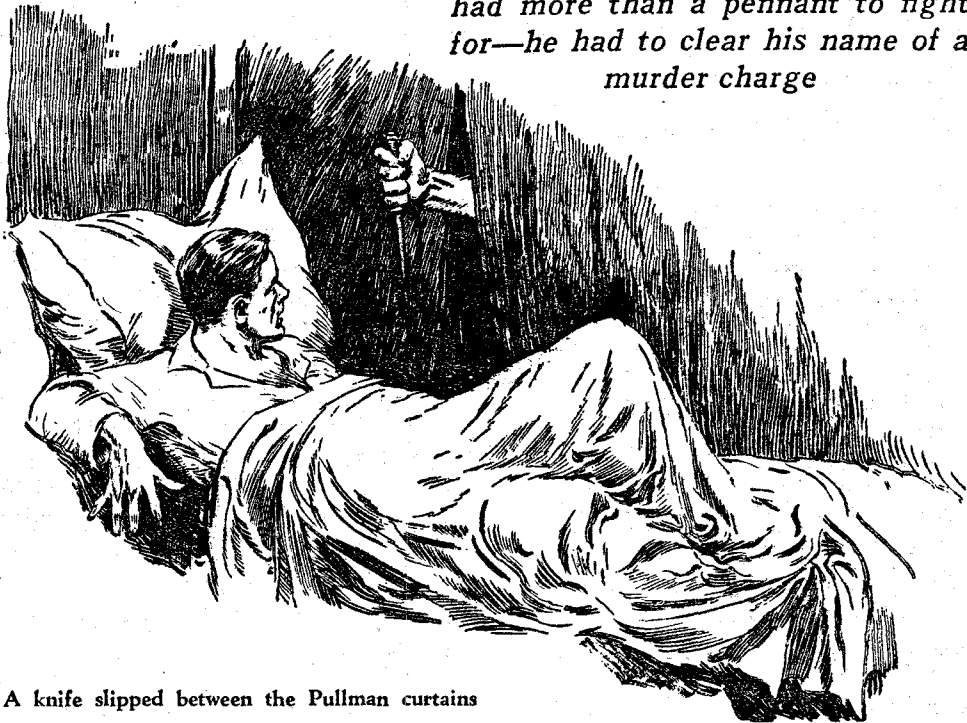
THE END.

The Diamond Specter

By HERBERT L. McNARY

Author of "Murder on Ice," "The World Series Murders," etc.

Dave Manning, big league pitcher, had more than a pennant to fight for—he had to clear his name of a murder charge



A knife slipped between the Pullman curtains

THIS STORY HAS JUST BEGUN—START IT NOW

WHEN a black cat followed Dave Manning to the pitching box as he was about to start his first big league exhibition game in Tampa, the Roman recruit was none too well pleased with the omen. Not that he had much to worry about as far as his pitching went—he had come to the Romans the previous fall and had immediately made good.

Dave shoed the cat off the diamond—and looked at the opposition bench to see Spike Connors, Roman trainer, talking to Flash Wilson of the Wolverines. Dave wondered, as the game progressed, whether Connors had told Wilson that he, Dave, was not supposed to throw

curves until a hand injury healed. Wilson, and the whole Wolverine team, seemed to know that secret.

Dave lost the game. Afterward, in the dressing room, he pounced on Connors and shook him like a rat when Connors abused the black cat. Connors said nothing, but he looked hatred at Manning.

That night, at his hotel, Manning saw Johnny Egan, the boxer with whom Manning had had his last fight before giving up the ring to enter baseball. Egan was his sworn enemy, and Manning suspected that Egan was in the place for no good.

Cashing a ten-dollar bill at the hotel

This story began last week

desk, Manning, who knew engraving, noticed that it was counterfeit, and told the clerk. The latter seemed suspicious rather than grateful, as many counterfeit bills had been passed in the city recently. Going to his room, Manning found Egan there, drunk and belligerent. Manning knocked him down, went to notify the hotel authorities, and returned to the room to be knocked out by a blow from behind.

When he came to he was several miles out in the country, near a railroad track. Going to a near-by lunchroom, he learned from a morning paper that Egan had been murdered in his room, and that Manning was suspected of having run away after committing the murder.

Determined not to be caught until he had cleared his name, Manning changed clothes with a dead hobo who resembled him and who had just been killed by jumping from a trestle. So, Manning was declared dead and the case marked closed.

After dyeing his hair and having his broken nose straightened, Manning managed to get back on the Roman roster as a rookie, using the name of Jonas Hamilton. Although his resemblance to the supposedly dead Manning was remarked by members of the Roman outfit, including Payson Merritt, business manager, and President Cousins, owner, Manning suspected that Mike Murphy, manager, really guessed his secret.

CHAPTER VII.

"WHO KILLED JOHNNY EGAN?"

THE Romans rushed off the field as Manning's final strike thudded into Keady's glove. The players swarmed into the locker building under orders to dress quickly so that they might catch the train that would carry them homeward after a highly successful trip, but hurry or no hurry, the Romans piled on Manning, slapped him, hugged him and good-naturedly wrestled him.

"Iron man!" "He had 'em eatin'

out of his hand!" "Boy, with that kind of pitchin' we'll make monkeys out of the Wolverines."

And alone off in a corner and fully dressed stood the dark featured Paul Chadwin. Chadwin had been given another opportunity to start a game and win back a first string rating, but he had blown a good lead. It had been Chadwin whom Manning had relieved.

"Chadwin knocked out of the box, relieved by Hamilton." For the third time on this all-important western swing the message would be clicking over the wires for the Roman fans to read the next morning. One name replacing another. A year ago this time Manning had been the big name with the Romans. A few weeks ago it had been Chadwin. Who remembered Manning? Chadwin was being forgotten. Hamilton gleaming from the sporting pages. Baseball has more ups and downs than the elevators in the Empire State Building.

"Hurry, you fellows, and cut out the fooling." Murphy's sharp tones cut through the steam and pungent winter-green odors of the crowded locker room. "You don't want 'em hookin' our Pullman on the midnight. We'll eat on the train. Come on, Spike, what's keepin' you."

"I ought to give Hamilton's arm a rub."

"You can do that on the train."

But Manning had other ideas. A sly, suspicious pest, Spike Connors. Manning had no intention of having Connors rubbing his arm and peering with those bloodshot eyes of his at the roots of Manning's hair to see if the light hair had been dyed. Manning wouldn't trust Connors with a secret.

Curious fans still remained outside the park gates as the showered, sleek-haired young athletes in unfamiliar

civilians hurried out to the line of waiting taxicabs. These fans had seen the Romans give the Maroons' pennant hopes a rude jolt, but their resentment took the form of good natured riding, mostly for the smiling and fun loving Ed Coblentz.

With a police escort leading the way, the string of taxis sped away for the railroad station. Ten minutes after leaving the park the Romans were piling into their Pullmans, most of them concerned with a scramble to be first into the diner. Ballplayers eat light before a game, but how some of them can make up afterwards!

THERE will be some changes in berth allotments," declared the business manager, Payson Merritt, who assumed many of the duties belonging to the traveling secretary. He called names from a slip and the changes were minor until—

"Hamilton and Chadwin will change berths. Hamilton take Number Ten lower, Chadwin take Ten upper. That is all."

Although not officially so, lowers are usually assigned to regulars and uppers to substitutes. The change as read off by Payson Merritt was in effect demoting Chadwin from a first string pitcher to second string and raising Hamilton—or Manning—to the status of a starting pitcher. And Merritt's beady black eyes indicated how well aware he was of the significance.

A laugh broke the silence. Spike Connors's mean cackle. "When you're a flop you go up, and when you're on the up you go down. That jest shows how screwy baseball is."

But nobody laughed at Spike's ill-chosen attempt at witticism. Most of the players were scrambling forward towards the diner. Paul Chadwin went

to his berth slowly and shoved his bag behind the seat.

Manning felt sorry and a bit guilty. It wasn't a rookie who was ousting Chadwin, but a proven big league twirler, a pitching sensation the year before. Perhaps Chadwin would not feel so bad if he only knew.

And that pair, Merritt and Connors. They had taken a savage delight in Chadwin's downfall. There had been no need to read off the berth assignments so publicly; but Merritt and Connors seemed to have this in common, that they resented the ball players who were younger than they and for the most part not so intelligent, and yet who on pay day drew down so much bigger stipends.

The full capacity of the diner must have been absorbed by now and Manning saw no need to go forward, and he did not want to sit down with Chadwin—not yet. A few remained in the car. Flash Wilson, no; Manning eschewed Wilson as did most of the Romans; or Wilson avoided his teammates. Either way it amounted to the same thing. Funny, that Wilson of all men had to be traded to the Romans.

Manning saw the bulk of Ed Coblentz up forward and headed along the swaying car towards him. Coblentz worked on the theory that the later men into the dining room had a better chance to enjoy their repast without being conscious of a crowd standing at the rear yelping to hurry up.

Besides, Manning wanted a heart to heart talk with Coblentz. He needed to pump somebody, and the loquacious, gossip gathering Coblentz was by far the best man on the team for information. Going west, "Hamilton" had been only a rookie; but now he rated a lower. Coblentz gave him an unexpected break.

"Sleepin' in lowers, huh, kid? Dave Manning never had a thing on you."

"I got something on him," drawled Manning, and as Coblenze shot him a puzzled look he added, "Manning is dead, and I'm alive."

"Yeah, Manning is dead all right, but you give us a shock when you turned up like you was his ghost."

"I've been curious about Manning on account of people saying we look alike. It's like telling me I look like a murderer. Do you think Manning actually killed this Egan?"

"Well, now you got me. If the police had pushed an investigation, they'd 'a' found plenty that would 'a' disagreed with 'em; but they find Manning dead an' let it go at that. Me, I was within a few feet of Egan when he got bumped off an' I don't know any more about it than you do."

"You were there?" exclaimed Manning.

"Practically speakin'. My room was near Manning's and I was in my room at the time."

LONG ago Manning had mentally reviewed the room plan of the Bayview Hotel wing. He knew that Manager Murphy and his right eye, Keady, shared a room in the ell; so did Spike Connors and an assistant no longer with the team. The room adjoining Manning's had been assigned to Payson Merritt and Joe Flood, the traveling secretary, while Coblenze and Carrington shared a room beyond that. But Coblenze's statement was the first evidence Manning had that some one else could be identified as being near by at or about the time of the murder.

"I suppose you were the only one near at the time."

"No, I wasn't." Coblenze lowered his voice. "There's a guy right in this

car I always figured could tell a lot about what happened that night." He hesitated and Manning restrained an impulse to look around even though he had a feeling of eyes boring into his back.

"Who?" he asked.

"Flash Wilson."

"Flash Wilson?" repeated Manning in astonishment. To cover his surprise he added quickly, "But Wilson wasn't with the Romans when that happened."

"No, but Wilson was in the hotel that night. We'd played the Wolverines that day an' they had a game the next day with the Braves in St. Pete. That's just a short hop from Tampa so the Wolverines stayed over."

"And Wilson was near—near Manning's room?"

"Yeah, like I'm tellin' yuh. I was gettin' dressed in my room. Me an' Crab Haley was goin' over to take a last look at Ybor City—I like the Spanish omelettes they serve in them Cuban restaurants—and I was supposed to pick up Crab in the lobby at eight. I busted a shoe lace an' I'm late 'cause I look at my watch an' it's eight now."

Manning became more acutely conscious of a pair of eyes boring into the back of his head. He wanted to turn, but feared if he did so he might encounter the gaze of Flash Wilson, and if Coblenze followed his gaze and saw that they were being observed by Wilson, the big first baseman would naturally change the subject and perhaps never revive it again.

"There's a knock on the door," continued Coblenze, "an' I think it's Crab. 'Okay,' I says an' the door opens and there's my friend Flash. He looks at me an' I look at him. 'I guess I got the wrong room,' he says an' beats it. Well, I find another shoe lace. Me an'

Crab is kind of late blowin' back an' slip into our rooms. Carrington is poundin' the hay an' I don't know a thing about the murder till the next morning."

"Was Flash around the next morning?"

"No, he pulled out with the Wolverines."

"If Wilson came to your room by mistake he must have been going to some room near by."

"Yeah, an' here's another funny angle. This Johnny Egan is at the game that afternoon. I see Wilson chinnin' with him, an' I see Merritt gabbin' with him, too. An' Merritt had the room next to mine. Some of the phony money we got come from Merritt. Course that ain't sayin' he wasn't stuck like any one else. But he's a queer guy, Merritt. An' how did he know Egan? Egan just blew in from Cuba that day."

And now Manning could no longer resist the impulse to turn around. The clicking of wheels on the rails, the swaying, creaking cars made many noises that might hide the stealthy approach of any one. Manning turned—and looked into the face of Spike Connors!

"How about rubbin' that arm of yours—Hamilton?" It seemed to Manning that the trainer hesitated just an instant over the name; but his blotched face revealed no informing expression.

"My arm is all right," declared Manning testily. "Besides, I'm going in to eat."

"Okay. See you in the diner."

THE trainer walked forward, swaying slightly with the pitch of the train. How long had he been sitting in the seat behind? How much had he heard? These questions

plagued Manning. There was just enough mean streak in the trainer to betray Manning, once convinced that Hamilton and Manning were identical, even if the betrayal killed the Romans' pennant chances.

And Manning thought he was being observed by Wilson. He looked back and saw that Wilson was absorbed in a magazine. Even as Manning watched, Wilson laid aside the magazine and started to come forward towards the diner.

"Let's go in and eat," suggested Coblenze.

"Just a second." Wilson passed them, and after the car door closed, Manning and Coblenze rose and followed. They met a number of the players returning, the first rush of hungry players having been satisfied.

In the diner Manning and Coblenze sat opposite each other. Just after they gave their order Chadwin entered and started to sit down beside Coblenze. He saw Manning, colored slightly and went on and dropped into a seat across from Wilson. Coblenze looked after Chadwin.

"Your good luck is his bad luck," said the first baseman; "but that's baseball. He's got the wrong slant on life. There ain't no place on a ball club or anywhere for a crape hanger. Him an' the bird he's sittin' with make a good pair. Pass them rolls. I could eat a pig raw."

But Manning was more concerned with Wilson than with Chadwin. Wilson faced towards him and Manning had a chance to study the outfielder. The Flash Wilson who had been traded by the Wolverines to the Romans was not the same Flash Wilson of last year or of that exhibition game in Tampa. He had suffered in baseball ability and he had changed in disposition.

Murphy had obtained him to bolster his outfield, to give the Romans speed and a left-hand hitting fly chaser; but Wilson had been a sore disappointment. Always a consistent .300 hitter, his average had dropped below .250. The troublesome, colorful playboy had become as docile as a lamb; and sports writers were blaming Murphy for the change. The sage manager of the Romans had always been a strict disciplinarian and the writers accused him of holding Wilson in check, of curbing the impetuosity that had made him so effective. And as usual Murphy offered no defense.

But Wilson was docile. Something preyed on his mind. Was it knowledge of what had happened in Manning's room in the Bayview Hotel? Manning wondered.

It was seeing Wilson order a light dinner that gave Manning an idea; an idea that depended on his getting back to the Pullman before Wilson.

Although hungry, Manning ate little and consumed his order quickly. He passed up coffee and dessert and excused himself to Coblenze, realizing that he had dropped a peg in the big first baseman's estimation. Coblenze liked big eaters.

Manning returned quickly to the Pullman and dropped into the first vacant seat. Several sections had been made up and the porter was busy on others. Those not made up held crowded groups of card players and kibitzers. Manning took an envelope from his pocket and tore off the back. Making sure that there was no identifying mark he printed four words with a pencil and then went towards the rear of the Pullman.

Casually, but making sure that he was unobserved, Manning picked up the magazine Wilson had been read-

ing and glanced through it. When he again laid down the magazine it contained his message, inserted between pages.

Manning drifted on toward the narrow passageway that ran outside the drawing room occupied by Murphy and Keady. He stood there smoking a cigarette while, out of the corner of his eye, he watched the other door.

Presently Flash Wilson appeared. He went directly to his section and Manning watched him as he dropped onto the green plush seat. Wilson looked out into the night for a moment and then absently picked up his magazine. Manning saw the paper flutter free. He saw Wilson pick it up and turn it over—and then he saw Wilson's eyes almost pop out of his head. Blood drained from his face. His mouth opened as if to give vent to a cry. He half rose from his seat—and then Manning ducked out of sight.

Four words had accomplished the startling effect on Flash Wilson. They were:

"Who killed Johnny Egan?"

CHAPTER VIII.

ATTACK IN THE NIGHT.

DAVE MANNING would not have been satisfied with his ruse had he been able to foresee the reaction, or at least the subsequent event which in the light of evidence seemed to be a reaction to the scare he had given Flash Wilson. But Dave Manning saw only that at last he was making progress toward the solution of the murder of Johnny Egan, for which crime Dave Manning was publicly convicted even in death.

Wilson had been placed at the scene of the murder by Coblenze and at the

approximate time when the murder had been committed. True, he might have gone away immediately from the door of Coblenze's room; but it seemed more reasonable that he had continued on to the room which had been his destination when he had knocked on Coblenze's door by mistake. And what room was that? Payson Merritt's? Obviously, Wilson had been expected. And Coblenze had seen Wilson talking to Egan at the ball park, as had Carington; and Coblenze had also seen Merritt and Egan in conversation at the Tampa park. Thus were the three linked together: Wilson, Egan and Merritt.

Behind the murder, of course, was the gigantic counterfeiting plot that had exploded or had been arrested by the murder of Johnny Egan. The newspaper accounts following the murder and the subsequent minor arrests throughout Florida had indicated a plan to dispose of money through sporting centers. A good plan; money circulated more loosely, in greater quantities and with greater carelessness around the race tracks, casinos and hotels frequented by the sporting element. Suppose the plan included enlisting a member of every ball team training in Florida? Not necessarily a player. Players are inherently honest. But some one connected with the team. A man like Payson Merritt, say. And for the Wolverines—well, the unpopular Wilson had a different disposition from most ball players.

And Flash Wilson had something on his conscience traceable to that night in Tampa; his changed disposition and his inferior ball playing indicated as much. And Dave Manning had proven Wilson's connection with the murder of Johnny Egan at least to his own satisfaction by the startling effect the un-

expected question out of the past—Who killed Johnny Egan?—had on Wilson.

By the same token Manning had revealed his own hand. He had shown a man connected with the murder that all had not been laid at rest with the burial of the supposed Dave Manning. But with the characteristic disregard for personal danger of a physically powerful man, Dave Manning overlooked his own danger from that angle.

He had been standing in the vestibule smoking and now he dropped the butt to the metal shield over the car steps and stamped out the smoldering ashes. Then he returned to the Pullman. Wilson he did not see and he wondered at his absence. Chadwin sat alone in the section reserved for himself and Manning and which was not yet made up. Forward a game or two of bridge was in progress. Chadwin glanced up as Manning approached. The corners of his mouth twitched.

"Well, we change places. You get the lower to-night and I get the upper." Manning didn't sit down but stood against the seat rest. "I wouldn't pay much attention to that. It was Merritt's idea. His dyspepsia makes him take it out on others . . . Or maybe it was Murphy's plan to give you a jolt."

"It gave me a jolt all right. Might as well ask waivers on me. I thought I'd finish the season riding in lowers."

"Well, there ain't no law against us changing. Me, I prefer uppers." This was not the exact truth, but Manning thought he could stretch a point. He was in no position to incur the resentment of any man on the team.

Chadwin's dark eyes brightened. "I would like that. I can't sleep well in uppers. As a matter of fact I'm not sleeping well at all lately."

"You worry too much. Just forget about yourself and you'll go to sleep all right."

Manning moved forward along the swaying aisle, narrowed now by the hanging green curtains. He stopped beside a game of bridge played by a dozen or more; that is, four played the hand, but the onlookers took just as active and vocal a part in the proceedings as those who held the cards. Finally, Murphy came through the car and told the players to go to bed. Manning drifted back to his section, which had been made up. He could hear Chadwin breathing in the lower berth as he climbed into the upper.

IT was a hot night in late August and Manning realized that he had made some sacrifice in giving the lower to Chadwin. The hot, stuffy upper felt as close and confined as a coffin.

How late it was he didn't know. He had not fallen into a heavy sleep, but he must have been dozing. Above the many noises of a train moving swiftly through the night one alien sound prodded his consciousness. He turned his head on the pillow and blinked into a black void. He identified that sound now. The rasp of the curtains drawn across the berth. It sounded strangely like the rasping of palmetto leaves, and Manning felt a sensation of cold sweat on his brow. That sound had evil significance for him. How creepy a train could be at night. More weird sounds than a haunted house...

A muffled cry! A wild commotion in the bunk beneath him! Dave Manning froze in momentary horror. The seizure passed and he sprang into action. He hurled aside the sheet which had been his sole covering and grabbed for the curtains; but in the darkness he could not find the opening. When

he did succeed in parting the curtains and was able to emerge from his temporary prison he all but dropped on the head of Chadwin, who was in the act of scrambling out of his own berth.

"What's the matter?" demanded Manning.

"Matter!" exclaimed the excited Chadwin. "Some one just tried to kill me! Get Murphy!" In the darkness of the confined, curtained aisle of the swaying car only his eyes were luminous, and these were the wild eyes of a frightened or hysterical man.

Heads were thrust out through curtains. "Hey, go to sleep!" "Pipe down!" "Get off that nightmare!"

Chadwin lowered his voice, but not his excitement. "Get Murphy. There's a madman loose in this car."

The porter appeared advancing from the forward end of the car. In the darkness only his white coat was visible, so that he presented the appearance of a headless and legless apparition floating down the car aisle. And then from the near-by drawing room Murphy appeared, also a bit ghostly in his white pyjamas. Manning felt his skin grow prickly.

"What's going on here?" demanded the manager.

"I've been attacked!" cried Chadwin. "Some one tried to kill me."

"Shh, pipe down," hissed the manager. "Come into my room, the pair of you. Porter, one of my players has been dreaming. I won't need you."

"Yes, suh, Mr. Murphy."

The porter retraced his steps and the manager led Chadwin and Manning into his drawing room. The light had been snapped on, and Keady was climbing out of his bunk, rubbing sleep from his eyes.

"I wasn't dreaming," protested Chadwin as Murphy shut the door.

"All right. I said that for the porter's benefit. Now, what actually happened? What are you carrying that pillow for?"

Chadwin, still shaken, still wide eyed, his dark hair disheveled, produced the pillow he had been clutching.

"I'll show you why. Look at this!" And as he held it up Manning saw a large rent in the white case.

"A knife did that. A knife that was meant to kill me." He was still a bit hysterical.

"There's blood on your pyjama shirt," observed Murphy.

Manning saw the dark stain about the size of a quarter on the blue pyjama coat. Chadwin saw it too, for the first time, and all but collapsed. He went whiter, if that were possible, and had to be helped to a sitting position on the edge of Murphy's berth. Murphy pulled back the coat.

"Just a scratch," he observed. But he failed to comment that the trickle of blood was just above Chadwin's heart. Manning noted the fact, however, and his lips compressed grimly. Murphy examined the pillow on both sides.

"Knife went right through," he announced sententiously. "Now, tell me what happened. Here, take a drink of water."

Chadwin gulped the water and passed a hand over his forehead, but failed to brush the wild look from his eyes.

"I don't know. I couldn't sleep. I haven't been sleeping well. I was lying facing the aisle, and I was sort of clutching the pillow. Then I heard some one at the curtains. The next thing I knew an arm came through. There was a little light from the window. Anyway, I could see the blade of a knife.

I didn't have time to move. I didn't even realize that I pulled the pillow in front of me, but that is what I must have done, and I yelled."

"That's all? You didn't see any one; you couldn't identify the hand or anything?"

"No. It vanished instantly. Then Hamilton almost dropped on my neck."

Murphy turned to Manning. "You know anything about this?"

"Nothing that I can add. I heard the commotion and had trouble getting out of my bunk. There wasn't a soul in sight when I landed in the aisle except Chadwin."

"Say," interjected Keady, who had kept silent, "I thought you were sleeping in an upper to-night, Chadwin?"

"Hamilton and I exchanged berths," said Chadwin.

Manning felt himself go cold all over. He looked toward Murphy and found the manager gazing intently at him. The grizzled mentor had been puzzled as to why any one should want to attack Chadwin; and Manning, too, had forgotten that Payson Merritt had assigned him to the lower, assigned him publicly. And at the moment of attack Manning had been asleep. He would have had no time to pull a pillow between himself and the plunging knife.

CHAPTER IX.

POISON.

THE Romans arrived in the hostile city of the Wolverines the next morning with no knowledge of the near tragedy that would have exploded like a bombshell on the baseball public. Headlines that again would be screaming a baseball mystery were denied the press by Manager Murphy. He imposed a strict silence

on Chadwin and Manning and promised to sift the matter to a solution himself. But Manning realized that this was a promise born of hope rather than confidence. The hand that had struck in the dark had vanished in the same void and had left no trace.

Murphy did give a statement to the press, however. He reminded the reporters that the Romans had always been tough foes for the Wolverines and that the late Dave Manning had held an Indian sign on the home team; and that because his new sensation, Jonas Hamilton, resembled Manning so much he would use him in the series on the hunch that he would exert a similar mastery. He asserted, however, that Hamilton was far from a finished pitcher, and might need a spell in the minors.

But Manning saw service that very day. He went into the game in the seventh inning with the tying and winning runs straining on the bases and none out. While the fans howled in excitement he filled the sacks on Murphy's orders and then fanned the next batter and forced the next Wolverine to ground into a double play. He saved the game.

The Romans split a double header the following afternoon. On the third day Murphy started Manning and in nine innings of superb pitching Manning gave the Romans their third victory. The Romans lost the final game, but by capturing three out of five had reduced the leaders' lead to three and one-half games. The Maroons also picked up a game on the Wolverines; but the Maroons would be on the road most of September while the Romans and Wolverines would be playing at home.

An excited fandom turned out to welcome the Romans home and interest

centered in the new pitching sensation, Jonas Hamilton.

"As good as Dave Manning ever was." "Dave Manning's double." Dave Manning read these and other similar assertions in the security of his rooming house. Any time now there might sound a knock on the door and a plain-clothes man might enter and inform him he was being held for the Florida police.

But the season wound on through as exciting a September as baseball ever witnessed. The Wolverines fought stubbornly, the Maroons refused to be counted out of the picture and the Romans kept on playing the best brand of baseball in the league. Used frequently as a relief pitcher and occasionally as a starting chucker, Manning continued to be the salient factor in the Romans' pennant drive.

Meanwhile Manning continued to work on Flash Wilson. Variations of the startling challenge Manning had placed in Wilson's magazine on the train popped up repeatedly. Manning clipped a "Wanted for Murder" from a handbill, pasted it over a newspaper picture of Wilson and inserted it in the latter's locker. Moving picture titles such as "Guilty as Hell," or any phrase Manning came across usually confronted Flash Wilson at some unexpected moment. Manning could not go directly to Wilson and make him talk, but he was forcing the ex-Wolverine to the breaking point. Wilson knew something. Soon, in desperation, he would seek out the authorities and tell what he knew.

THE Maroons met the Wolverines in a series that absorbed the attention of a frenzied baseball nation. The two teams split a four-game series—but at the same time the

Romans cleaned up against the Beavers and gained two games on both teams. Manning pulled the iron man stunt of relieving one day and then starting and winning the following day. The Romans pulled into a position one game behind the Maroons and two behind the Wolverines—and then Holbrook stuck his meat hand in front of a ball and dislocated his thumb!

Holbrook was a fast ball pitcher, one of the aces of the Romans' staff. Manager Murphy's face became grave when he learned the bad news. Then he turned to Manning, standing in the group about the injured pitcher.

"I've got to shoot the works," he said. "Somebody's got to double up for Holbrook."

Even the layman could hardly conceive of a rookie giving the performances Dave Manning turned in on the mound in the next two weeks as Jonas Hamilton; and baseball men shook their heads. Dave Manning felt the shadow of a hand reaching across the diamond towards him—and just before the vital Maroon series that hand fell upon Dave Manning's shoulder. He received a request to appear before the district attorney.

Manning entered a mellow office that seemed to contain the shades of many public prosecutors, the good and the bad. Instead of encountering the stern visage of the law in the presence of District Attorney Anthony Parker, he found a striking looking man with curling hair gray at the temples and a demeanor almost apologetic. Parker came up for reelection this fall and he sensed the wrath of the fandom if through any action of his the Romans should be deprived of this sturdy youth who stood before him—who sat down at the D. A.'s kind gesture.

"A very inconvenient matter has

come up, Mr. Hamilton," began the public prosecutor. "A letter to the authorities in Florida has been forwarded to me."

He passed over a sheet of ordinary typewriting paper such as might be procured at almost any five-and-ten-cent store.

Manning read the brief letter.

Is Dave Manning actually dead, or is the resemblance of Jonas Hamilton of the Romans more than a resemblance? It might be worth while to investigate.
One who knows. A FRIEND.

If the district attorney expected to learn something from Manning's reaction he remained disappointed. As soon as he received the summons Manning had an idea what to expect and he came forewarned. And long ago he had prepared himself for just such an emergency. The name of Jonas Hamilton had not been assumed haphazardly. By diligent search of records in Kansas City he had picked out the name of an only son of parents now dead. Calmly Manning passed back the letter.

"I run against something like this every day," he evaded. "If you want to check up I'll give you the date and place of my birth and any facts you wish to know."

"I wish you would," said the D. A. "A purely routine matter. I'll send the information back to Florida and let them investigate if they wish." He appeared only too anxious to pass the buck.

"If you are interested in tracking down this letter," declared the district attorney, "it was postmarked from this city and the machine used was a Denton, and you will notice the 's' is out of alignment. I'll put an expert on the matter if you wish."

"Don't bother," declared Manning with a disarming smile. "It is just the letter of some crank who thinks he has made a startling discovery."

Manning rose and the district attorney offered no objections. Whatever the D. A.'s personal opinions and doubts, he realized that he had interviewed a cool customer. He would need to be well fortified with facts and evidence before he took a step he was only too anxious to avoid or postpone. Let the Florida officials handle the matter if they wanted further action.

BUT Dave Manning left the county building far from as unperturbed as he appeared. Anything like a serious investigation would break down the identity of Jonas Hamilton. Perhaps the real Jonas Hamilton was still alive, or some of his relatives were. The wheels of the law had begun to turn. Who had put them in motion? The real murderer of Johnny Egan? Willing to reopen a case in which the police were no longer interested? A worried, desperate murderer with a guilty conscience? Flash Wilson?

Dave Manning arrived at the ball park to find Mike Murphy greatly concerned over his absence and, according to Coblenze, phoning every conceivable location in search of his missing chucker. Manning went upstairs to the club offices which were scantily manned at this lunch hour. Payson Merritt sat at the absent stenographer's typewriter and pecked out some correspondence. He glanced up as Manning entered and his dark, penetrating eyes fixed upon Manning.

"Murphy has been looking for you, Manning," stated the business manager in brusque tones. "He is in Mr. Cousins's office."

Manning started for the private

office of the president, and it was not until his hand was on the knob that he realized that Merritt had addressed him as *Manning*!

Manning turned quickly to find those sharp eyes still fixed upon him. The thin, pale features revealed no hint of the business manager's inner thoughts. Calmly he turned his attention to the sheet of paper in the machine; and Manning pushed open the door.

"Oh, you're here," exclaimed Murphy with relief. "Nothing happened?" His questioning gray eyes asked more than his words.

Manning mumbled something about being delayed. As if from afar he heard Murphy say that his absence following the injury to Holbrook had upset him; and that he wanted to start Manning against the Maroons and to shoot him back for the fourth game of the series; but Manning's thoughts concerned Payson Merritt. Merritt had called him by his right name. Purposely? Or abstractedly because unconsciously prompted by the resemblance? Or because Merritt had for some time suspected the real identity of Jonas Hamilton?

Murphy had opened the door to lead the way out, and Manning followed. In the outer office Payson Merritt no longer sat at the typewriter, and Miss Lynch, the stenographer, was approaching the desk after having just returned from lunch. As Miss Lynch picked up some papers on the desk one sheet fluttered to the floor. Manning retrieved it—and momentarily he paused. The substance of the letter, referring to the purchase of some materials, meant nothing to him—but, clearly, the letter "s" was out of alignment!

He glanced toward the machine and read the name "Denton." The anony-

mous letter sent to the Florida authorities had been written on this typewriter. A puzzled pucker formed between the blue eyes of Miss Lynch.

"Does any one else beside yourself use this machine?" he asked.

"Every one," she answered with a half smile. "And from the shape it is in I think they use it for batting practice. Did you want me to type something for you?"

"No, I just saw Merritt using it and wondered."

"Oh, he uses it a lot."

And Manning went downstairs digesting that information and realizing that Merritt had called him "Manning."

MOST of the Romans had dressed and were already out on the field by the time Manning reached the locker rooms, but a few stragglers were still climbing into uniforms. Manning could hear Coblenze's voice booming from behind a section of the lockers. A great chap, Ed Coblenze, a tremendous asset to the Romans with his war club on the field and an equally valuable factor off the field because of his good nature and friendliness.

Coblenze came around the section of lockers that included Manning's and stopped.

"Oh, here you are," he greeted. Then he lowered his voice slightly. "Murph seemed awful anxious about you. Anything wrong?"

"No."

"Listen, Hamilton don't happen to be a phony moniker, does it?"

Manning's hands froze in the act of lacing his shoes, and not for a moment or two could he trust himself to look up. "Why do you ask?"

"You looking so much like Dave

Manning and asking me so many questions about him that day on the train, why, I got to thinkin' you might be a twin brother of his."

Manning hesitated. If he should take any one into his confidence he would prefer the big fellow to any one else; and yet he was unwilling to reveal himself entirely.

"I am interested in the murder Dave Manning was supposed to have committed."

Coblenze's reply surprised Manning. "So is some one else," said the first baseman.

Coblenze started to elaborate, but checked himself because of a sound that originated on the other side of the section of lockers. "Maybe I'd better tell you later," he said. "I'll see you outside."

Jimmy Hines, the club bat-boy, appeared. He may have been responsible for the sound that had deterred Coblenze, but the appearance of the bat-boy prompted another sentiment in Coblenze.

"Oh, Jimmy, just the bird I want. Run up an' get me two ham sandwiches an' a bottle of ginger ale. Mustard on the ham an' leave 'em in my locker."

Jimmy departed and so did Coblenze, in the direction of the passage leading to the field. A moment later Manning completed dressing and started after Coblenze. He bethought himself of the sound that had imposed a precautionary silence upon the first baseman, and out of curiosity Manning poked his head around the other side of the section of lockers—and encountered the penetrating gaze of the pair of black eyes belonging to Payson Merritt.

Of course there were many reasons, Manning told himself, why the business manager might be in the locker room. He might have come down to

discuss a matter of supplies with Spike Connors. As a matter of fact, Manning thought he had caught a glimpse of the trainer just beyond the edge of another section of lockers, but Manning had pulled his head away after confronting Merritt. Merritt had an unpleasant faculty of popping up at the most unexpected moments.

Manning walked out onto the field and crossed the diamond to where Coblenze was working out around first base preliminary to taking his turn in batting practice.

"What was it you wanted to tell me?" asked Manning.

"Oh, about some one else still being interested in who killed Johnny Egan." Coblenze ran to the bag, took a throw from third base and whipped it to second. "Merritt's been askin' more questions than a squad of cops. Especially about whether I heard or saw anything that night in the hotel. Merritt had a room near mine, too."

"Was he in it at the time of the murder?"

"He didn't commit himself, but I got an idea he was pretty much interested."

Payson Merritt again. Manning walked over to the bench to start warming up.

BALL one...Who had typed that warning letter? Merritt?...

Noisy fans still pouring into the park...Ball four...Keady's assuring voice...He had seen Merritt use that typewriter...Ball two! The announcer still calling batteries out by the right field bleachers...What did he know about Merritt?...Ball four...Another Maroon trotting to first...Fans grumbling...Murphy nervously rubbing his chin. Keady walking out with the ball..."Take it easy, kid."

Maroon coaches shrilling...Maroon players at the edge of the dugout jumbling bats...Merritt, silent, aloof, abrupt; unfriendly; representing entirely the commercial aspect of the game; boasting that he sat ten yards from the game daily and never looked on...Ball one...Mencken warming up hurriedly in the bull pen...Merritt had been passing out money just before the counterfeit currency had appeared in Tampa...Ball two...Was Merritt the alleged Roman connected with the counterfeiting mob?

"Come on, kid; two on an' nobody down..."Ball three..."Take him out...Boo. Hey, Murphy, what are you startin' rookies for in a game like this?"...Infielders gathering around..."I'm all right." Strike one. Sarcastic cheering from the crowd. *Crack!* Foul by inches out there in left field. Can't make 'em too good with men on bases...Ball four...Sacks loaded..."Take him out. *Take him out!*" Keady walking out, pounding ball in glove and looking inquisitively toward the bench..."I'm all right. Just a wild streak." Mencken in the bull pen waiting for a signal. Keady stalking back to the plate.

When would the Florida officials press the investigation? The body of the supposed Dave Manning would be exhumed. His mother would be an accessory after the fact.

He must keep his mind on the game. Forty thousand fans all watching him. The pennant responsibility had been placed on his shoulders. Manning steadied himself in the box. The infield crept in. Manning kept the ball low and close to the batter. With the count two and two the batter connected. The ball shot back through the box. Manning knocked it down, recovered and threw home in time for a forceout.

The runner reached first in time to prevent a double play and the sacks remained loaded. Manning pitched carefully. Keady narrowly missed grabbing a foul that fell into the stands and then returned to his position to catch a ball that Manning burned over for a third strike. The same fans who a moment before had been jeering Manning now hailed him as a hero. But he still needed to retire one more man.

This batter worked Manning to the limit. With the count three and two he proceeded to hit four successive fouls. On every pitch three men started tearing around the bases and had to return. The fans groaned at the suspense.

The batter connected with the pitch and rifled a ball toward first. Coblenze knocked it down and picked it up as Manning tore across to cover. Coblenze started for the bag and suddenly fell. Manning, the nearest to him, saw that something was wrong. Coblenze's face grew livid and he grimaced in agony. The batter put on renewed speed. Coblenze tried to get up and stumbled again—and then in an underhand toss he looped the ball to Manning and sprawled on his face!

Manning scooped the poor toss on the run, stepped on the bag a stride ahead of the runner and then dashed over to Coblenze. Players gathered around the stricken first sacker as the big fellow rolled on the ground clutching his stomach.

They carried the first baseman off the field. The club physician, present at the game, hurried down from the grandstand and arrived in the locker room almost as soon as the players carrying Coblenze. The doctor gave a hurried diagnosis of gastronomic poisoning and prescribed an emetic. Man-

ning had helped carry Coblenze into the locker room but had to return quickly because the Romans went out in order.

MANNING went to the mound worrying over the significance of Coblenze's injury and made the mistake of grooving a ball for the Maroon batter. The batter smacked the apple to the fence and stretched the hit to a triple. A fly brought him home, and although Manning got the next two men on strikes he saw a figure one go up on the score board as he walked off the mound.

In the dugout, Manning learned that Coblenze had been rushed to the hospital in the event it became necessary to use a stomach pump on him. The injury cast a pall of gloom over the Romans, even though none entertained the dark suspicions harbored by Manning.

That one run loomed large as the innings wore on. Manning held the Maroons in check, but the Romans seemed to have lost all their batting punch with the removal of Coblenze.

But in the seventh inning Manning came to bat with a man on first and two out and with hardly any one hoping for a run. But Manning crossed up the Maroons by clicking the first ball to deep right. The runner leaped away with the crack of the bat and slid over the plate with the tying run while Manning reached second. Crab Haley repeated by punching the first ball served him for a single that brought in Manning with what proved to be the winning run.

"Better let Spike give that arm a rub," Murphy told Manning as he followed him into the dressing room.

Manning had no more to do with the trainer than he could help, but now as he saw Connors watching him with

a half sneer on his lips he offered no direct refusal.

"Changed your mind about me, huh?" grunted the trainer as Manning hopped up on the table. "What's the matter? Have I got what your best friends won't tell yuh?"

"Maybe I'm superstitious," said Manning tersely. The sickening odor of chloroform liniment assailed Manning as the trainer picked up a bottle.

Murphy came over. "I want to see you, Hamilton, after you get through." And then he added for Connors's benefit in a tone Manning thought indicated a desire to remove attention from his first request, "Take good care of that arm, Spike. It will be worth a quarter of a million dollars the next few weeks."

The trainer's damp hands paused for a moment and then commenced their rubbing. Manning looked up. Flash Wilson was standing near by, and Manning saw that Wilson had digested the full significance of Murphy's statement. A quarter of a million dollars. Men had committed murder for much less.

Manning found when he had dressed that Murphy had gone upstairs, so he followed after him. Merritt let him into the office, observing him silently and penetratingly, and directed Manning to Cousins's private office. Manning found only the manager there, a very much troubled manager.

"I just heard from Coblenze. He'll be all right, maybe play to-morrow; but it was a close call. He had some ginger ale before the game. He had Jimmy Hines get it and leave it in his locker—"

"Yes, I heard him tell Jimmy."

"Ed says when he opened the bottle the top came off easy. The ginger ale

tasted funny. He thought some one might have played a joke on him and so took only a couple of mouthfuls, fortunately. *That ginger ale must have been poisoned!*"

Manning felt a cold sweat come over him as he stood under the surveillance of those gray eyes. "Why are you telling me?" he asked finally.

"Because I know one attempt has been made on your life. Coblenze is my defensive ace. You're my offensive ace. Whatever madman is responsible might make another attempt to injure you, and so keep us out of the pennant."

Manning breathed easier. Murphy was thinking in terms of the pennant. Manning could prescribe another motive.

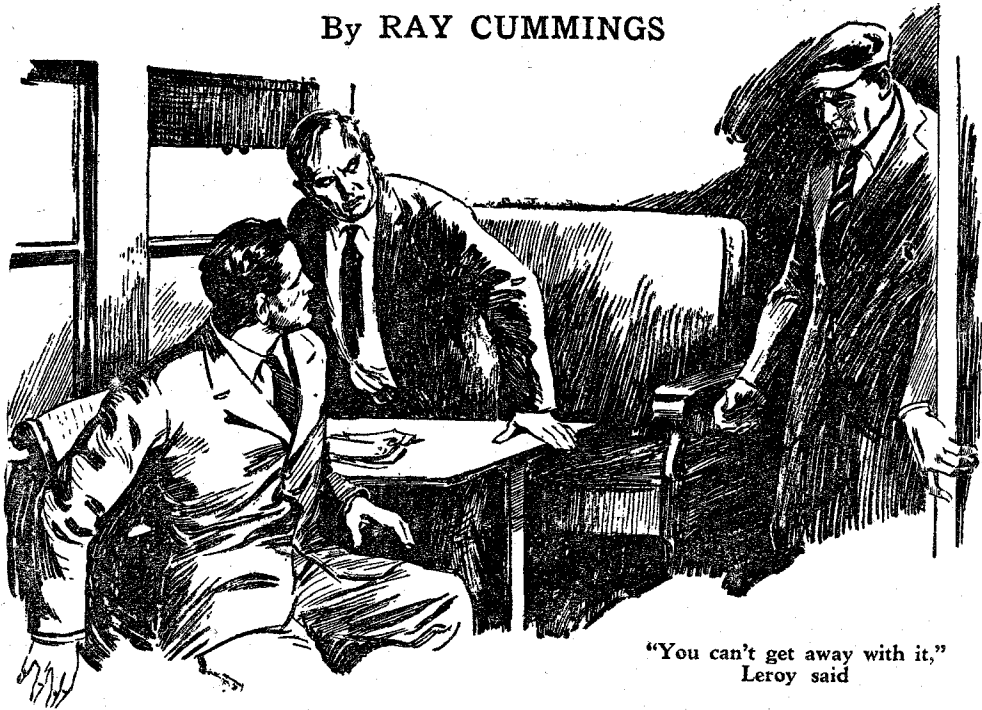
Murphy was speaking again. "I could call in the cops, but like that knife attack on the train there ain't much to go on. I questioned Jimmy Hines and there isn't a chance the bottle was tampered with before he left it in Ed's locker. Between that time and the time Ed took it an army was in the locker room. And afterwards the bottle disappeared. Something handy at the moment was dumped into the bottle. Chloroform liniment or carbolic acid. Either could have been found in Spike's stuff when he was out of the room for a minute."

Manning left the office. As he passed through the outer office he saw Merritt lift his eyes from his work, stare at him for a moment and then turn to his work again. It was a known fact that Payson Merritt worked here in the office frequently after the ball park had been enshrouded in darkness. A very industrious man. How industrious? Merritt had been in the locker room when Coblenze had ordered that ginger ale.

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.

Hot Goods

By RAY CUMMINGS



"You can't get away with it,"
Leroy said

*It was crook against crook when Pete Leroy met Basker—with
the devil after both of them*

PETE LEROY had the theory that crooks were the easiest suckers of all to swindle. And it gave him a thrill when this fellow Basker tackled him. Basker was a confidence man, but not a very smart one. That was obvious. It hurt Leroy's pride a little that Basker should pick him for a sucker; but it only showed that Basker was a poor judge of character, which is a fatal defect in a confidence man.

Leroy had sized up the situation within a few minutes after Basker—half an hour ago—began to work on him. Leroy, through long experience, knew all the tricks of the trade. Basker was using the "rush-touch" method; all in a breathless hurry; a great

emergency which forced Basker to make a sacrifice and gave Leroy a chance to profit.

"It's your chance," Basker was saying earnestly. "I'm going out to Topeka to get married. I'm forty-five, but that's not too late to get married, is it? The ring's my present to her. I couldn't afford it, but I bought it for her anyway. You know how that is—an' now my kid brother's in a jam. Wild boy—always in a jam, but this is serious. Here's the telegram I just got from his lawyer. He needs bail—an' a little cash for bribery money. You know how that is. I just got to sell you this ring—got to telegraph the cash back to New York the next time this train stops. Now listen—"

They were sitting in Leroy's compartment of a fast transcontinental train, heading west over the plains of Kansas. It was about ten o'clock at night. Leroy shared the compartment with George Snell, his partner. They were traveling to Topeka on a special job—a little blackmail affair which had been pending a long time. Snell was in the club car now. Basker, who had boarded the train in the early evening, didn't know of Snell's existence. And Snell was waiting now in the club car for the signal to get into action.

Leroy said, "Well, I don't like to buy things from people I don't know." He sat back and looked reluctant but open to argument. He was a young fellow who by his aspect could have been a traveling salesman of the prosperous type. He added:

"You've got cash. You said so. How much do you need? How much have you got?" He smiled. "I don't want to drive too hard a bargain with a man in trouble. In fact, I don't think I'll go into this thing at all."

"You must," Basker urged. "You can't let me down. I want you to drive a bargain—that's all right, it's your chance. My kid brother's in jail. You know how that is—"

IT was obvious that Basker was lured in the beginning by Leroy's bankroll. Leroy had bought ginger ale and cigarettes from the porter a while ago, and flashed the roll. That roll was a conceit of Leroy's to which Snell had always violently objected. But it was genuine money and Leroy got a kick out of showing it. And now it had brought them this sucker. Basker had gone to work on Leroy the minute he saw the roll.

"You know how that is," Basker was saying.

4 A—9

"Yeah," said Leroy. "An' don't say that any more times. Get down to cases. You said you had a few hundred dollars with you—"

Basker had done more than that. With a show of earnest harassment he had briefly produced a very handsome gray leather wallet, filled with large bills. And it was then that Leroy had interrupted the affair for a minute, hurried into the club car and fixed things up with Snell.

"About six hundred an' fifty," Basker said. "That's all I've got. Here—you don't believe me—look at it."

Basker was a pretty fair actor. He was a middle-aged, flabby fellow, with seedy clothes, and he needed a shave. And a haircut. His stringy, iron-gray hair was plastered now on his wet and harassed forehead. Certainly he looked the part he was playing. Leroy judged he was a one-system man, always working this "I'm-in-desperate-trouble" gag.

The wallet was very handsome, and the money in it—twenties, fifties and hundreds—was real money. Leroy prided himself that he was an expert on that. He hated counterfeit money. So did Snell. They avoided it now after several disastrous experiences of the past. And they could spot it a mile away.

Basker's money was real. But the telegram from his kid brother's lawyer was phony. Leroy was a stickler for detail. Basker had given him only a hurried look at the crumpled telegram. He had never thought that Leroy would notice that the date was wrong. But Leroy looked for that at once. The date was more than a week old—and there were several other little things that showed it was merely typed on a telegraph blank.

Leroy said, "Let's take a look at that ring again. I don't think I want to buy any jewelry."

The train was speeding at a good clip, with the wind rushing past the screened but opened windows of the compartment, and with a rhythmic clatter of the rails.

"You got to help me out," Basker said. He shuddered as the train whistled. He added, "That whistle—is that for Careyville?"

"No," said Leroy. "Don't think so. Ten or fifteen minutes yet before we stop."

"You just got to help me," Basker insisted. "I'm going to wire the money at Careyville—we stop there ten minutes. Listen—don't argue—name your price. I'll make any sacrifice within reason."

It struck Leroy that Basker was rather overdoing his show of excited haste. He acted on the verge of panic to sell this ring and wire the money from Careyville. In an hour they would reach Topeka, which would do just as well for the mythical kid brother. That was the trouble with unskillful crooks—they were apt to overdo the rush act.

"How much money you need?" Leroy demanded. "You got six-fifty—how much you want to wire?"

"A grand," Basker said. "Er—that is, I mean, a thousand dollars."

What a bungler! Leroy grinned to himself. An honest man in desperate trouble saying he needed a grand!

BASKER tried to cover up the slip; he added hastily, "Listen—look at the ring. I shouldn't have bought it for her—you know how that is. I paid sixteen hundred for it. That stone is three and three-quarter carats!"

Leroy held the ring up to the dim compartment light. It was a very large, very handsome looking solitaire, platinum mounted. But though Leroy never failed to spot counterfeit money, he was not so sure when it came to jewelry.

"Sixteen hundred," Basker insisted. "That's what I give for it. I need to wire a thousand—I got six-fifty. Say you give me five hundred. That leaves me a little over. I don't want to be broke. You know how that—"

"Maybe," said Leroy, "but I don't know much about jewelry."

He handed the ring back. He pushed the button for the porter. It set Basker into a panic. He shoved the ring into his vest pocket. He leaped to his feet, gripping the wash stand to steady himself as the train lurched. And he gasped:

"What you—what you doing? You not—not going to help me?"

"Ordering ginger ale," Leroy said, smiling. "Sit down—you're all excited. I didn't say I wouldn't help you."

"Oh!" It calmed Basker. He sat down and mopped his forehead. "You will buy it?" he said eagerly. "Make it four-fifty. What a chance for you! I swear I paid sixteen hundred. Maybe I've got the jeweler's bill of sale with me." He began rummaging his pockets. "No, guess I haven't. I must have thrown it away. You know how—"

There was a rap on the door. Leroy called:

"Come in, George."

The porter stood in the crooked little companionway.

"Two ginger ales, George."

"Yassir. Comin' up in a rush, sir." His white teeth shone in a field of black. He seemed very pleased with

Leroy, in anticipation of the fat tip which would come from this compartment at Topeka. He closed the door.

Leroy sat back again. Leroy himself was in a rush now, but he took care not to show it. Ordering this ginger ale was the signal to Snell. The porter would go to the club car buffet to fill the order. Snell would see him; ask him if the ginger ale was for Compartment B in Lake Torrington car. And then Snell would get into action.

Leroy said, with a show of sudden decision:

"All right, Basker. I'll go you. It's taking a chance—honest, I don't know phony jewelry when I see it. But I think you're on the level."

"I am. Of course I am. I paid—s'elp me—sixteen hundred. Listen, let me—"

Leroy raised a hand. "You don't need to talk any more. I'm slow deciding—an' then I'm decided. Here's your money."

He produced his bankroll. But immediately put it back into his pocket. Some one knocked on the door again. It was the porter with the ginger ale. He fitted the bracket table between the windows, put the ginger ale and glasses on it and took his money and tip with a grin, and thanks.

"O. K., George," said Leroy. "Oh, an', George—how long before we get to Careyville?"

"'Bout ten minutes," said the porter. "Was pretty late, but we sure is makin' it up." He departed.

"**N**OW," said Leroy briskly, as the door closed, "let's finish this up. Here's your money. Four-fifty, you said."

Basker put the ring on the table. Leroy counted out four hundred and fifty dollars in fifties and twenties. He

kept his hand on the pile, breathlessly waiting. And then came another knock on the door.

"That fool porter," Leroy muttered. He called impulsively, "Come on in, George."

The door opened. The bulky, thick-shouldered figure of Snell loomed in the narrow doorway. His cap was pulled low over his eyes. He slipped into the little compartment and closed the door after him. And snapped its lock with an ominous click.

Leroy gasped. Basker seemed to wilt. Leroy grabbed the ring and Basker grabbed the money. But Snell pounced, not on Leroy, but on Basker, twisting his wrist so that the money fell back onto the table.

"That's better," Snell muttered menacingly. "You leave it there, brother—want to have a look at that—an' a little talk with the two of you."

"A hold-up!" Leroy gasped. He reached slowly for the bell-button, but Snell said vigorously:

"You better not do that. I guess you birds don't want any publicity."

Basker had collapsed on the bench. His face was gray; his teeth chattering.

Leroy said, "Who—who the devil are you? A hold-up? You can't pull that—can't get away with it."

Snell stood towering over them. He showed no weapon, but his bulk, his lowered cap, his leering, confident grin were menacing enough. Snell could look and act like a pretty tough customer when he wanted to—and he was doing just that now.

Basker was completely breathless from fright. Leroy made a show of getting on his feet, but Snell knocked him roughly back.

"You sit where you are," Snell commanded. "Who'm I? Well, I ain't a dick or a cop—nothin' like that. I

ain't an officer of the law at all—nor a hold-up man. In my own Chicago racket, if I told you my name you'd know it, all right."

Basker just sat staring, pop-eyed. What Leroy gasped neither of the others seemed to hear, so Leroy shut up and gave Snell the floor.

"What I'm doin' here—" Snell was addressing Leroy now—"I'm trailin' you. I'm hired right now by a millionaire, Jamison. Know of him? The Jamison case?"

Basker looked suddenly confused. But he knew of the Jamison case, of course. It was nationally famous. A millionaire's child kidnaped. A large ransom paid; and when the child wasn't returned, the numbers of the ransom bills were made public. And then the father hired several notorious underworld characters to make further contacts with the kidnapers.

Snell picked up some of the money off the table—the money which Leroy had just paid Basker. He examined the bills triumphantly and dropped them back to the table again.

"Hot money!" he exclaimed. "I knew it! Jamison's ransom money! So you birds are the Jamison kidnapers, are you? Won't this be nice for me!"

SNELL was flourishing an ugly automatic now. But it was totally unnecessary. Leroy was shrinking back, trembling, and watching Basker. The confusion on Basker's face turned to horror. And when the kidnaping story sank in, he utterly collapsed. Swindling is a very mild crime compared to kidnaping.

Then Basker found his voice. He mumbled, "No! No! That's a lie! I'm no kidnaper. Maybe he is—that's his money. It's not mine. If it's hot money I don't know about that."

"Shut up!" said Leroy. The train whistled. The brakes went on a little; they were slackening pace for Careyville. Leroy met Snell's leering, exultant gaze. Leroy said:

"See here—we've got money. I stole those bills—I'm not a kidnaper—"

"Well, you can tell that to the police an' Jamison," Snell retorted.

Basker wasn't so dumb. He came suddenly to life. He produced the gray wallet, waved it.

"Listen, this ain't hot money. It's mine—good money—six-fifty. You—you take it. Let me get off at Careyville."

Snell snatched at the wallet and stuffed it into his pocket. "You'll beat it off the train?"

"Yes! Yes! You let me go," Basker pleaded. "I'm no kidnaper—I don't want to be mixed up in the Jamison case. All I want is to get off this train—"

The train was really slackening now. Inwardly Leroy was gloating. They had Basker petrified. The last thing in the world Basker would do was make any commotion. He'd duck off the train at Careyville and run for his life. The train would go on, bearing Leroy and Snell to Topeka as per schedule. And they would have Basker's diamond ring—phony or not as the case might be—and his assuredly good six hundred and fifty bucks.

The train whistled again. Snell snatched up Leroy's money from the table. He swung his weapon on Leroy.

"You," said Snell, "I'll take you on to Topeka an' turn you over."

"And m-me?" Basker chattered. "I can go now? You'll let me go? You know I ain't a kidnaper—"

"Neither am I," growled Leroy. "He's an ass."

"Oh, yeah?" Snell barely turned. "You can go," he said to Basker. "Not now! Wait till the train stops. Just slip out quietly—"

"Yes. Yes—I'll do that. That's all I want to do."

He stood trembling by the compartment door. Snell kept Leroy covered with his automatic.

The train came to a grinding stop. A conductor was calling, "Careyville! Careyville!" The glow of distant electric signs showed through the compartment's windows.

And in the sudden silence of the motionless train came the sound of a commotion. The tramp of heavy feet in the car corridor; a *mêlée* of passengers' voices; a woman's sharp frightened cry; and a man's voice:

"That's all right, ma'am. We wired ahead for the police. There's a thief aboard."

THE corridor outside the compartment suddenly seemed jammed with men. A voice—a heavy official, commanding voice—called:

"Watch those vestibules—don't let anybody out—"

The three occupants of the compartment were all on their feet, transfixed. Leroy saw a new horror on Basker's gray face. Basker stood at the door with a hand on the lock. He clicked the lock open: then he clicked it closed again. Then he swung around, in a panic, mumbling:

"Why—why, what's this? They've got me."

Another voice outside—very close outside their door: "Conductor says he went in here. We'll get him red-handed."

And somebody else called: "Three of 'em in here the porter says. Watch it, sergeant, they might be armed."

The doorknob began rattling. Then some one was pounding heavily on the door.

The three inside looked at each other. Leroy saw that like a fool Snell was in a panic. Snell could look bulky and impressive. He could overawe a cowering victim. But Snell had an unconquerable fear of police. He was shaking now.

The pounding grew louder. A shoulder was heaving at the little door. But the metal door of a Pullman is not easy to break. A growling voice was saying:

"Open up here—you three—we've got you—"

Leroy had jumped for Basker, shaking him. "You damned idiot—d'you steal that ring?"

"Y-yes. Let me go—you— Yes, I stole it—"

"Here on the train?"

"Y-yes. From an old woman, just a little while ago, before we stopped the last time. An' from a man—two cars ahead—the wallet—I thought—"

The door still held, but it was shivering under the blows. Leroy turned to the window. Everything had happened within a minute. This accursed fool Basker had committed two robberies here on the train—no wonder he wanted to decamp at Careyville. The conductor had kept it quiet—watched and saw that there were two other men here with Basker. From that tank-station stop half an hour ago, word had been sent ahead to the Careyville police.

Leroy, at the window, found the shaking Snell and the even more frightened Basker crowding him. Basker was mumbling:

"You—you're crooks, too? You're scared, too? You—you fooled me. I thought—"

"Shut up," snarled Leroy; but it was drowned by the outside voice:

"Open up here!" and renewed violence to the door.

It was dark outside the windows. Lighted city streets were a block or so away. Most of the long train was under a station shed; but this car with two or three others stuck out into the darkness beyond the platform. Dark, just at the moment, on this side. Nobody out here. A chance now.

LEROY, in the midst of his whirling thoughts, was ripping the window screens with his penknife. Feet first, he slid and dropped nimbly to the gravel roadbed. Basker and Snell stuck in the narrow openings, but he pulled them through. Snell turned his ankle; he ran limping and cursing with Leroy and Basker ahead of him.

Leroy led them. They ducked in the darkness close against the Pullmans. They came to the observation platform at the end of the club car. Nobody on it. They rounded it. The other side was brighter. Men were coming this way along the tracks.

"Back!" Leroy whispered. He turned. Then all three ran, with Leroy leading them across the tracks, and they ducked behind a string of standing freight cars just as the men came around the end of the train.

A declivity was here. They ran down it, jumped a dark ditch. Basker stumbled and Snell fell; but Leroy hauled him up.

"This way," Leroy whispered. "Run like hell."

There was so much commotion up at the train that Leroy couldn't tell if they had been discovered or not. The dark freight cars hid them here. Shacks were nearby, all of them dark. There were fences here. Leroy darted into a

little alleylike space; and came to a dark street of shacks. Ahead, at a corner with the lighted station a little beyond it, he saw an automobile standing parked. Just what they needed. Every one around the station seemed crowding toward the train. There were several parked cars. Leroy ran for a big sedan. Its windows weren't closed. Luck at last! The ignition key was in place.

Basker tumbled in beside him as the motor purred; and Snell crowded in with them.

A clean getaway. There seemed to be no pursuit. Leroy skillfully turned the car, headed it into the city. A big street of electric signs, movie theaters, restaurant and shops, and a trolley car was ahead of them. That wouldn't do. There was a traffic light turning red. If pursuit started, to get caught in a street like that would be fatal. Leroy swung nimbly into a smaller cross-street and hit up a faster pace.

Basker, sweating and panting, was crowding him. Leroy said, "Shove over—give me room."

Snell, too, moved over a little. Snell was recovering.

"Some class," he gloated. "This damned fool crook here gettin' us into a jam like that. You got the ring, Pete?"

"Sure have," chuckled Leroy. "An' you got the wallet—six-fifty. Not a bad haul."

Leroy swung around another corner. Neither of them bothered with Basker, who sat cowering between them. Leroy saw now how nicely everything was coming out. Head now for Topeka—it couldn't be more than forty or fifty miles. They'd dump Basker off somewhere as soon as they came to a lonely part of the road.

Snell was saying, "Get us out of

this fool city, Pete." And to Basker he growled, "You sit quiet—we're takin' you for a nice little ride."

It wasn't so easy to get out of the city. Another crowded street loomed ahead. Leroy became aware that there was a queer buzzing here in the darkness of the front seat. Something wrong with the motor?

Leroy's breath suddenly stopped. Right at his knees an eerie, microscopic voice began droning:

"Car X22, proceed to Northwest section, corner Twenty-eighth and Prairie Avenue. A robbery reported, number 2802 Prairie—"

A RADIO! This was a police car they had stolen! Leroy very nearly ran into a parked truck. He heard Basker's cry of fright, and a curse from Snell. And then from the dark back seat of the tonneau behind them came another voice; not electrical—a voice real, and alive:

"Sit quiet, you three. Don't make a move—I've got you covered."

Leroy barely missed a passing vehicle. He jerked at the wheel; he turned his head; the glow of a passing street light revealed a bulky, uniformed figure, seated alertly upright in the back. A policeman! He might have been dozing on the seat when they took the car. He was bareheaded and coatless. The passing light showed his coat rolled up for a pillow in the seat corner. But he was very alert now. He sat with a leveled gun in each hand.

The light showed the grin on his face. He had heard the words of the three men on the front seat. He knew they were the crooks from the train.

The street light faded. The tonneau went dark; there was only a gleam on the ugly barrels of the two leveled guns. Leroy saw that the huddling Snell had his automatic on his lap. It clattered to the car floor as Snell's knees shook. Thank the Lord for that. Leroy couldn't imagine a gunfight starting in this closed car.

He drove mechanically. He couldn't think of anything else to do. Basker and Snell sat tense and silent. The accursed radio droned and buzzed.

The man on the back seat said abruptly:

"We make a left turn here. Not so fast, you idiot."

Leroy mechanically turned them. The street was fairly full of traffic. Leroy's brain was whirling with a million futile thoughts, but his hands and his feet did the right things like an automaton.

"'Nother left turn—" said the commanding voice.

Leroy made it.

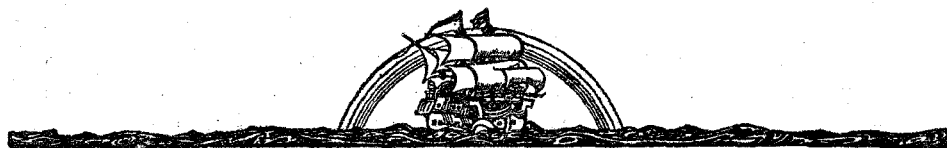
"Easy now—not so fast."

Leroy's foot came off the accelerator and went to the brake.

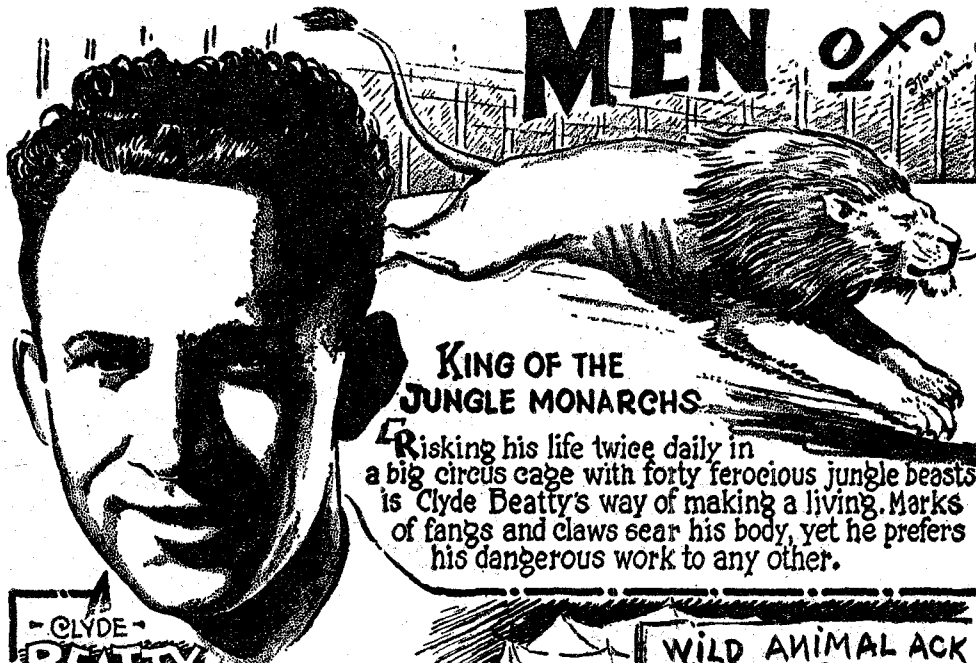
The voice said, cheerfully, "Over there on the right. Middle of the block. The two round lights by the steps. We stop there."

They pulled up at the Careyville Police Station.

THE END.

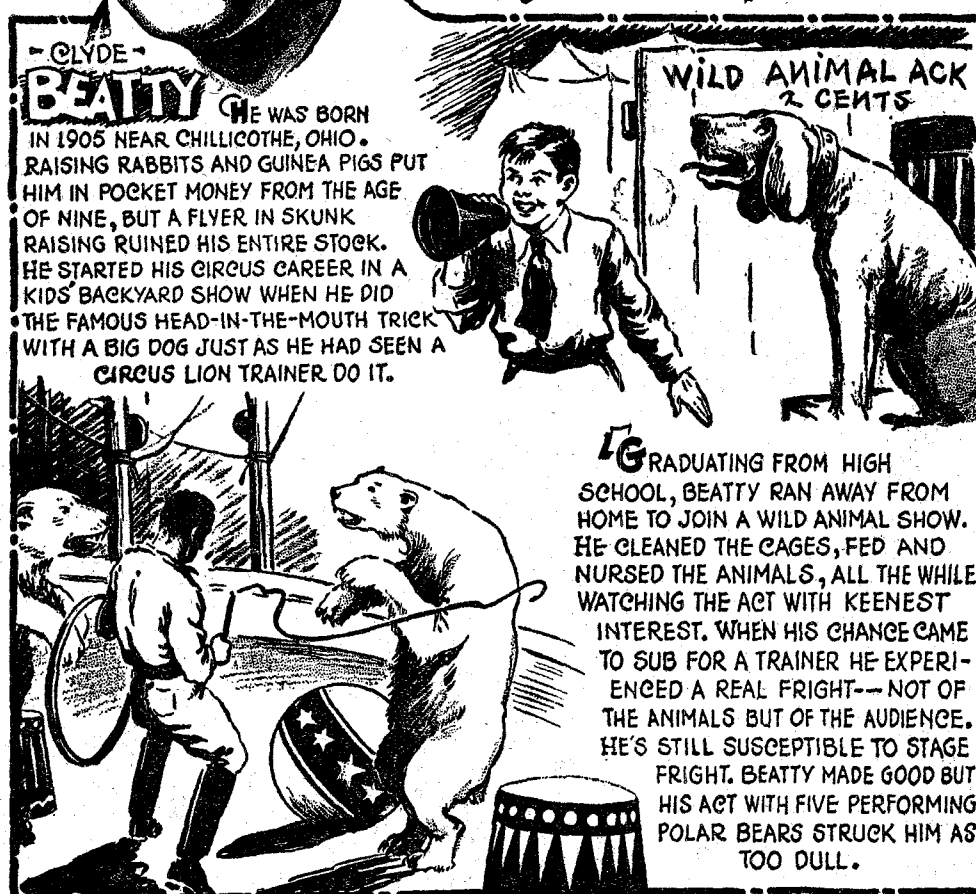


MEN 2



KING OF THE JUNGLE MONARCHS

Risking his life twice daily in a big circus cage with forty ferocious jungle beasts is Clyde Beatty's way of making a living. Marks of fangs and claws sear his body, yet he prefers his dangerous work to any other.



CLYDE
BEATTY

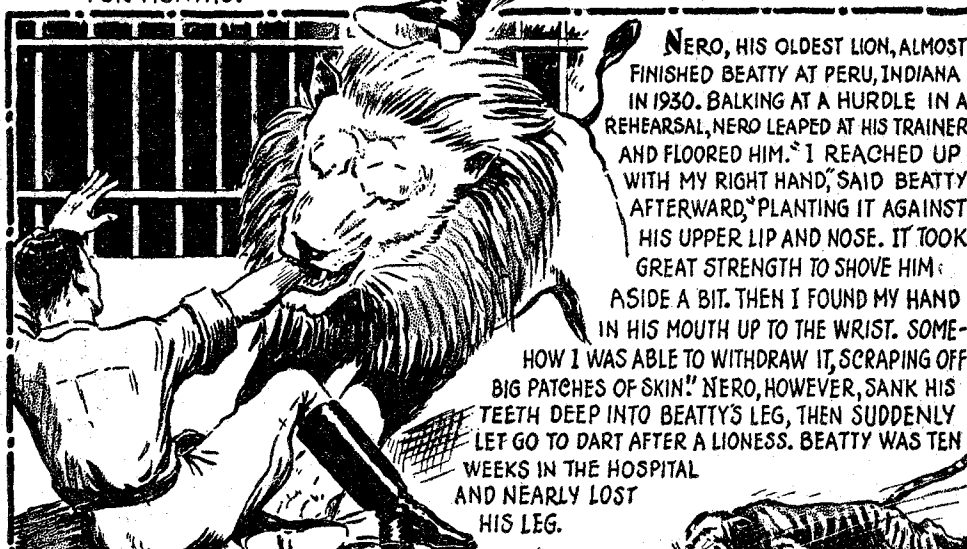
HE WAS BORN IN 1905 NEAR CHILLICOTHE, OHIO. RAISING RABBITS AND GUINEA PIGS PUT HIM IN POCKET MONEY FROM THE AGE OF NINE, BUT A FLYER IN SKUNK RAISING RUINED HIS ENTIRE STOCK. HE STARTED HIS CIRCUS CAREER IN A KIDS' BACKYARD SHOW WHEN HE DID THE FAMOUS HEAD-IN-THE-MOUTH TRICK WITH A BIG DOG JUST AS HE HAD SEEN A CIRCUS LION TRAINER DO IT.

GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL, BEATTY RAN AWAY FROM HOME TO JOIN A WILD ANIMAL SHOW. HE CLEANED THE CAGES, FED AND NURSED THE ANIMALS, ALL THE WHILE WATCHING THE ACT WITH KEENEST INTEREST. WHEN HIS CHANCE CAME TO SUB FOR A TRAINER HE EXPERIENCED A REAL FRIGHT—NOT OF THE ANIMALS BUT OF THE AUDIENCE. HE'S STILL SUSCEPTIBLE TO STAGE FRIGHT. BEATTY MADE GOOD BUT HIS ACT WITH FIVE PERFORMING POLAR BEARS STRUCK HIM AS TOO DULL.

This feature appears in ARGOSY every week



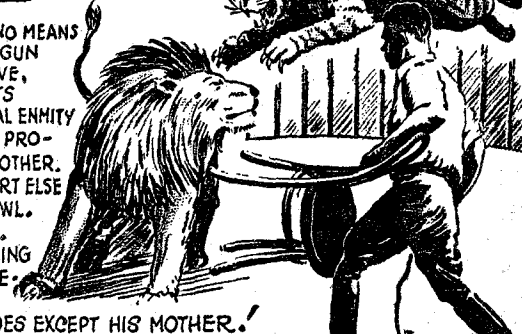
HE TOOK TO A MIXED GROUP OF LEOPARDS, LIONS AND TIGERS. THE ACT WENT BIG UNTIL A LION INJURED HIM SO BADLY THAT HE WAS IN A HOSPITAL FOR MONTHS.



NERO, HIS OLDEST LION, ALMOST FINISHED BEATTY AT PERU, INDIANA IN 1930. BALKING AT A HURDLE IN A REHEARSAL, NERO LEAPED AT HIS TRAINER AND FLOORED HIM. "I REACHED UP WITH MY RIGHT HAND," SAID BEATTY AFTERWARD, "PLANTING IT AGAINST HIS UPPER LIP AND NOSE. IT TOOK GREAT STRENGTH TO SHOVE HIM ASIDE A BIT. THEN I FOUND MY HAND IN HIS MOUTH UP TO THE WRIST. SOMEHOW I WAS ABLE TO WITHDRAW IT, SCRAPING OFF BIG PATCHES OF SKIN." NERO, HOWEVER, SANK HIS TEETH DEEP INTO BEATTY'S LEG, THEN SUDDENLY LET GO TO DART AFTER A LIONESS. BEATTY WAS TEN WEEKS IN THE HOSPITAL AND NEARLY LOST HIS LEG.

IN THE CAGE WITH THE ANIMALS BEATTY HAS NO MEANS OF DEFENSE OTHER THAN A WHIP, A CHAIR, AND A GUN LOADED WITH BLANKS. YET THESE, WITH HIS NERVE, AGILITY AND SKILL, SUFFICE TO KEEP THE BEASTS UNDER HIS CONTROL. BEATTY MAKES THE NATURAL ENMITY BETWEEN THE LIONS AND TIGERS SERVE HIM FOR PROTECTION, KEEPING THEM WORRIED ABOUT ONE ANOTHER. BUT HE MUST KEEP THESE BITTER ENEMIES APART ELSE THE ACT MIGHT TURN INTO A FREE-FOR-ALL BRAWL.

BEATTY HAS HAD 20 TRIPS TO THE HOSPITAL. HE SAYS HE IS THE ONLY MEMBER OF THE RINGLING CIRCUS WHO CAN SECURE NO LIFE INSURANCE. IT'S A BIG TIME WHENEVER BEATTY ARRIVES IN CHILLICOTHE WITH THE CIRCUS. EVERYBODY GOES EXCEPT HIS MOTHER!

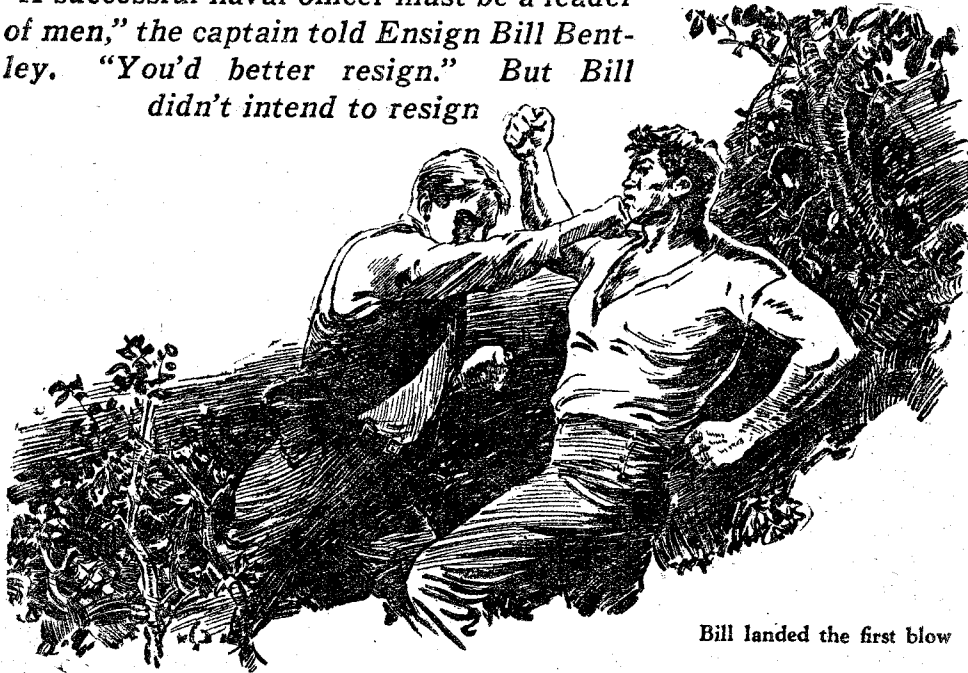


Next Week: Gen. Francis A. Sutton, Engineer and Soldier

The Chinese Frog

By JAMES LOCKETTE HILL

"A successful naval officer must be a leader of men," the captain told Ensign Bill Bentley. "You'd better resign." But Bill didn't intend to resign



Bill landed the first blow

"BAH! A poor excuse!" growled Captain Porter. "Ten days in the brig! Next case!"

It was report mast aboard the cruiser, U. S. S. Columbia, and the passage-way in front of the skipper's cabin was crowded. At the captain's command, "Shuffle" Joe Taylor—a first class bo's'n's mate—shuffled two steps forward, saluted, then removed his hat.

Captain Porter—who was short, red-faced, and wide of girth—read the charge listed in the report book aloud. "Disobedience of orders and insolence. Reported by Ensign William Bentley."

The captain turned to Bill Bentley with a frown. Bill had the torso of a wrestler, his legs were lithe and muscular, while his thin waist and narrow hips suggested terrific hitting power.

But, even so, he was a self-conscious, rather shy young man, with mild blue eyes and a soft voice. Shuffle Joe had dubbed him "Sweet William," and the name had stuck.

"Tell me about it, Mr. Bentley," directed Captain Porter sharply. Like most older officers, he believed the present-day ensigns to be a crew of softies. Also, he was a great boxing fan, and Shuffle Joe was the All-Navy Heavyweight Champion.

Bill Bentley fingered a mole on his left cheek. "I—I was on the Naval landing this morning, sir. Taylor got out of a taxi at the end of the pier. He staggered down to the float as though he had been drinking—"

"Just a moment," Captain Porter cut in. "You haven't reported him

for being drunk. Disobedience to orders and insolence are the charges!"

Bill wet his lips. He had feared it would be like this. He had never put a man on report before, and hadn't wanted to this time. But Shuffle Joe's conduct had been so openly insolent. And Ensign Larson, to whom Bill had gone for advice, had insisted upon it.

"You can't let him get away with it, Bill," Larson had said. "You'll lose face with your men entirely if you do. Taylor's head is getting too big for him anyhow. A sojourn in the brig will do him good!"

Bill shot a glance at the sailor. Shuffle Joe's battered lips were twisted into a contemptuous sneer. He was an ugly specimen, with long, gorilla-like arms. His nose had been smashed flat against his face, and his ears were two miniature cauliflowers.

"Come, come, Mr. Bentley," fumed Captain Porter. "Let's get along with this!"

Bill's mild blue eyes took on a greenish tint. He had a wild desire to poke the captain on his big and somewhat reddish nose.

"Yes, sir. Taylor came down the gangway to the float, passed right by me without saluting—"

The captain smashed the report book with an angry fist. "You didn't report this man for failing to salute," he stormed.

He turned to Shuffle Joe.

"Suppose you tell it, Taylor."

Bill flushed crimson. He had known for some time that the captain disapproved of him, but he had not expected anything like this.

SHUFFLE JOE shot Bill an arrogant look. "Mr. Bentley is mistaken about me bein' drunk, sir, and the reason I didn't salute is be-

cause I didn't see 'im. I was kinda day dreamin', livin' over the big fight, when I won the All-Navy belt, y'know, sir.

"So when somebody yells at me to put my hat on straight, I didn't know it was an officer. An' I answers: 'Lissen, Buddy, I'm old enough to know how to wear me own hat.' The motor sailer was alongside the float, so I kept on goin'. I didn't know it was an officer who had yelled at me until the Jimmy-Legs tells me I'm on report, about an hour ago."

Captain Porter wheeled around to Bill. "Is that what happened, Mr. Bentley?" His voice was sarcastic.

Bill wanted to answer: "He's lying, you old billy goat. He was drunk, and he saw me." However, Bill merely said, "Yes, sir, that's what happened, only I think—"

The captain stopped him with a look. There was a moment's silence, then he turned to the yeoman, a stoutish, intelligent-looking youngster.

"Let me see Taylor's service record."

The captain went through the record minutely. He was smiling when he had finished.

"Taylor," he said, "I think you're stretching the truth a bit when you say you didn't know it was an officer who spoke to you."

"However, your record is clear, not a mark against you this cruise, and I never spoil a clean record if it can be avoided. So I'm going to let you go with a warning. But next time somebody tells you to square your hat—do it. Don't get the idea that because you're an All-Navy champ you can do as you please!"

"Thank you, sir!" replied Shuffle Joe, flinging Bill a glance of triumph. "I'll be careful next time."

He put on his hat, saluted, then stepped back in line.

"That's all!" Captain Porter barked. "Report mast—dismissed!"

When the hard-faced master-at-arms had marched the erring sailors away, the captain turned to Bill. "I wish to see you in my cabin, young man. You'd better come in, too, Commander Rainey."

Bill followed listlessly. He knew that the captain was going to put him over the jumps, but he didn't care. A "warning" is not really a punishment, and Shuffle Joe would lose no time in spreading the news of how he had made a boob out of another ensign, or "insect," as he called them.

The captain waved Commander Rainey, who was the executive officer, to a chair. He was a tall, gaunt man with kindly eyes.

Captain Porter seated himself behind the large, flat-topped desk. It was bare save for a pile of correspondence weighted down by a grotesque green frog of stone which had two tiny emeralds for eyes. It was at once hideous and beautiful, and its origin and significance were unknown. Captain Porter had picked it up in Shanghai for a trifle.

Bill stood before the desk, his eyes on the frog. There was something fascinating about the ugly thing.

"Why did you drag Taylor up to mast on such a silly charge, Mr. Bentley?" questioned Captain Porter.

Bill looked at Commander Rainey, who nodded.

"Well, sir," Bill answered, "ordinarily I wouldn't have ordered Taylor to square his hat. But Commander Rainey told me yesterday that you were displeased with me."

"He was right!" declared the captain. "I was—and am!"

"I've tried to be a good officer, sir," Bill said. "I've worked and studied hard. I know I don't make the men salute or 'sir' me. But somehow those things seem unimportant."

"You see, sir, naval strategy is my hobby. The Navy's real job is to defend the country. All the saluting and siring in the world won't win battles."

THE captain banged his fist on the desk.

"You're wrong! Strategy is important, but it's the men at the guns who win battles. Knowing all the tricks in the book won't help a captain who hasn't the respect and confidence of his men."

"That's what I told him yesterday, captain," said Commander Rainey.

"Guess it didn't sink in!" fumed Captain Porter. "Putting a first-class fighting man like Taylor on report because he didn't have his hat on straight. Bah!"

"But he's been exceptionally difficult, sir!" Bill exclaimed.

"And whose fault was that?" countered the captain. "You can't make your men respect you—not the American bluejacket. You've got to win it! An officer can be perfect in every other way, but if he's not a leader of men, he's a flop!"

There was a long moment of silence. Captain Porter drummed on the top of the desk with his fingers. Bill shifted his feet nervously.

"Why didn't you report Taylor for being drunk?" Commander Rainey asked.

"I didn't want him court-martialed, sir. Besides, he wasn't really drunk, just been drinking a little."

"He failed to salute you?"

"It was possible that he didn't see me."

There was another long, awkward silence. The captain finally spoke:

"I've been watching you for some time, Mr. Bentley. Your division is not up to par. Your men are unkempt, almost slovenly."

Bill realized the truth of this statement. For some time now his men had been out of hand. Bill's orders had either been ignored or carried out half-heartedly. Bill had coaxed and threatened, but to no avail. Having no power to assess punishments, Bill's only recourse was to put the men on report. But this would have been an admission of weakness.

"You aren't a leader of men," Captain Porter said brusquely. "In fact, you aren't even officer material. They should have realized this at the Academy. You should not have been given a commission!"

Bill's heart froze. Not officer material! Should not have been given a commission. Why, the Navy was his whole life. He had always wanted to be a naval officer—an admiral.

"No," continued the captain, "you're not officer material. You're too easy going—too soft! I think it would be best for you to resign!"

Bill swayed as if he had been hit below the belt.

"And that nickname of yours—Sweet William," the captain went on, "has made you a laughing stock. Nothing is more fatal to an officer. You can't command men who are contemptuous of you. Yes, it would be better for you to resign!"

Bill's shoulders came back with a jerk. His mild blue eyes became as green as jade.

"I won't resign!"

Captain Porter half rose from his chair. His gray eyes narrowed to mere slits.

"You won't resign, eh!" he stormed. "Well, I can't make you, but I can make you wish you had! I'll give you until noon to-morrow to change your mind. That's all, you may go!"

Bill saluted, left the cabin. He closed the door behind him, leaned against it; he was weak, giddy. From inside came the voice of Commander Rainey speaking to Captain Porter.

"A bit rough on the lad, weren't you, captain? He's got good stuff in him."

"He's keeping it well concealed, then," Captain Porter growled. "Sweet William! Bah!"

"I think you've got him pegged wrong," the commander said finally. "That frog on your desk reminds me of the old saying: 'You can't tell how far a frog can jump by the width of his back.'"

"Humph!" snorted the captain. "Bentley is like this Chinese frog, he can't even hop, let alone jump."

"His eyes turn green when he's angry," Commander Rainey argued. "That's a sure sign that he can jump."

"Tell you what," snapped Captain Porter, "you've always admired this green frog. If Bentley even so much as hops, I'll give it to you."

Bill was suddenly aware that the orderly was eyeing him. The marine coughed discreetly. "Beg pardon, sir. Do you wish to speak to the captain again?"

Bill laughed bitterly. "No! I've talked with the captain enough for one day!"

LATE that afternoon Bill sat in the cubbyhole of a stateroom that he shared with Ensign Larson. A sense of failure enveloped him like a low-hanging fog.

He had gone from the captain's cabin determined to prove that he was a leader. All afternoon he had shouted and roared at his men. But it had gone against the grain. By nature, Bill was soft-spoken, kindly.

And it had not gone over with the men, either. They had obeyed him, of course, but with tantalizing slowness. Shuffle Joe had been on his guard, carefully refraining from an overt act. Captain Porter would not, could not back him up again.

His attitude had been one of complete respect, but the dark, close-set eyes had burned with arrogant contempt. Bill had finally given up and gone to his room. Had he stayed on deck another moment he would have smashed his fist into the sailor's face.

"And you can't hit an enlisted man—aboard ship, anyhow," he mused, "without getting skinned by a general-court."

Yet force was the only argument Shuffle Joe understood. And he was the key to the situation. A boatswain's mate is the top sergeant of a Navy division, invariably a fighter who enforces orders with slashing fists. Once he was subdued, the rest of the men would fall in line.

Bill shook his head sadly. He had seen Shuffle Joe fight. He would not have a chance against him. He sighed deeply. He was licked and might as well admit it.

The ship's bell struck, once—four—thirty. On the deck above, the bugler sounded liberty call. Ensign Larson, a tall, sandy-haired officer, entered the stateroom and began to shed his uniform for civilian clothes.

"Going ashore, Bill?" Larson asked.

"Guess not."

Larson looked at Bill with pity.

"What you need, Bill, is a fast speed run. Charley Norton is on leave, got a room at the Bayview. He's invited a gang of us up for a game of stud. There'll be plenty to drink. Why not come along?"

Bill shook his head. "Guess not, Lars. I've got to bone up on navigation. I get my exam for J. G. next month."

"You're not going to resign, then?" Larson asked.

"No."

"I admire your nerve, Bill, but not your intelligence. That exam will be so tough that Einstein couldn't pass it. The Old Man will see to that. And you know what kind of duty a fellow gets when he flunks an exam?"

Bill nodded; he knew only too well. First, they would send him to Guam. The Virgin Islands would come next, and then if he was still sane, and hadn't resigned, he would get orders for Cavite. And this would continue until he reached the age limit for ensigns.

"I'm sticking," Bill said stubbornly.

When Larson had gone, Bill went up on topside. A piercing wind was blowing in from the Golden Gate, and he soon sought the shelter of the lee side of the No. 2 turret. The turret door was open and a couple of sailors lounged inside reading the afternoon papers, just brought aboard by a bum-boater.

"Look here, Mick," exclaimed one of them, "Old Hard-boiled Flint just made admiral. What d'yuh think of 'at?"

"Ain't surprised," Mick grunted. "Great old guy! He'll go to bat for a fellow any time, but he's as hard as his name. 'Member the time the ship's cook got tough with 'im?"

"Do I?" laughed the other. "Sail-

or, I'll never forget it! 'If yuh wasn't an officer,' the ship's cook says to him, 'I'd pin yur ears back.' Flint looks 'im right in the eye. 'I'm going ashore pretty soon in civies; I won't be an officer then,' he says."

"That cook looked like he'd tangled with an ammunition hoist when Flint got through with 'im," chuckled Mick. "Fella, them's the kinda officers I like . . ."

Bill went below to his stateroom, rang for Juan, the Filipino mess boy.

"Juan, you know Taylor — Shuffle Joe Taylor?"

"Yes, sir. Me know 'im."

"Tell him that I want to see him in my room at once."

TWO hours later, Bill got off a street car at the edge of town and headed down the road. He was in civilian clothes. Overhead the stars shone cold and inscrutable. There was no moon.

About half a mile beyond the car line he found Shuffle Joe sitting under and oak tree.

He stood up. "Sure yuh wanta go through with this?" he inquired. "It don't seem right to me."

"Certainly I want to go through with it," Bill rasped, removing his coat. "You've been telling all hands what you'd do to me if I wasn't an officer. Well, to-night I'm not one."

The sailor jerked out of his jumper with a curse, squared off.

For an instant Bill doubted the wisdom of this move. He had been taught boxing at the Academy, of course. But it had been two years since he had been in the ring. And Shuffle Joe could fight. He was fast on his feet, could hit like the crack of doom, and was as tough as armor plate.

Then Bill laughed. What difference

did it make? He was all washed up anyhow.

"What's so funny?" raved Shuffle Joe. "Think yuh can lick me? Betcha a five yuh don't."

Bill took a five dollar bill from his trouser pocket. Shuffle Joe produced his money. They weighted the two bills down with a rock.

"I'll take my dame to the All-Nations Café with that jack," the sailor cried, and closed in with that peculiar shuffle that had won him his nickname.

A long left slashed out. Bill knocked it down, crossed with his right full on the mouth.

The sailor spat blood and cursed. An indescribable thrill shot through the officer. Perhaps he had a chance after all.

But his joy was short lived. Shuffle Joe opened up with a devastating barrage. Never before had Bill seen so many fists. A left to the face spun him around. And then a right caught him squarely on the button. He went down, senses reeling.

Shuffle Joe stood over him, hairy chest rising and falling.

"Got enough?"

Bill did not reply. He lay for a few moments, sucking in mouthfuls of cool air. Then slowly, grimly, he propelled himself erect.

Shuffle Joe slashed out with both hands. Somehow Bill weathered the flurry. Blood came from a cut over his right eye, from his nostrils, from the corners of his mouth.

"Ain't quite so pretty now, Sweet William!" Shuffle Joe sneered. "Stick 'round, maybe I can make yuh look like a man!"

An overwhelming rage seized Bill by the throat. And for fully two minutes they fought as only men who hate each other can fight. Bone and flesh

pounded against bone and flesh with sickening regularity. There was no attempt at boxing.

Shuffle Joe was the first to take a backward step. Never had he seen a man who could absorb so much punishment, and still dish it out. Unless something happened, and quickly, he was going to be battered down. He had to outwit this insane demon or be disgraced.

He dropped to one knee. "I—I've got enough!" he whined.

"All right, Taylor," Bill panted. "Go back aboard immediately. Pass the word that the fo'c'sle must be shipshape before chow in the morning."

"Aye, aye, sir," Shuffle Joe agreed meekly.

As Bill started to turn away, Shuffle Joe's left hand darted out. Catching Bill by the wrist, he jerked the officer toward him. At the same moment the sailor's long, right arm came up. It landed solidly—Bill's forward motion doubling the force of the impact!

It was fully five minutes before Bill opened his eyes. He sat up with a groan. A stabbing pain ran from the point of his jaw to the roof of his head. Shuffle Joe and the money under the rock were gone.

"And I thought I had him licked," Bill moaned. "What a sap I was to let him pull that trick on me. It's as old as—"

He could not find a suitable simile, and lapsed into a bitter meditation. The news of the fight would spread all over the fleet. Enlisted men would laugh, gloat. The officers would maintain an embarrassed silence. And Bill could not explain that he had been tricked. It would sound too much like an alibi. In fact, he could not even admit there had been a fight.

Then he shook his head stubbornly.

"Be damned if I will. Lars was right. What I need is a good speed run. I'll get drunk, take a poke at a cop, and let a general-court kick me out like a gentleman!"

A FEW minutes past midnight, Bill showed three aces and two kings, and drew in his fifth consecutive pot. Larson threw down his cards, got up and staggered across the room to the bed where "Semaphore" Martin was snoring raucously. A moment later Larson was making it a duet.

Bill looked about the smoke-filled room. Bottles were scattered about like empty shells in a duck blind. Larson and Semaphore Martin lay on the bed. Chuck Winston was sprawled on the sofa. "Skinny" Draper and Frank Hemmingway were asleep in their chairs, their heads resting on arms folded across the table.

Bill counted the money on the table before him. He had won around two hundred dollars. Then he got up and walked across the room and back. He swayed a little, but his step was steady. He decided that he was not drunk.

A feeling of superiority engulfed him. He had not only taken the measure of the five best poker players in the fleet, but he had also outdrunk them. A man who could do that should not have to resign from the Navy. He was capable of doing big things.

He made a round of the bottles. They were all empty. He sighed his disappointment and looked at the sleeping men. They were all classmates of his, and all of them were making good. Soon they would be J. G.'s (junior grade lieutenants), while he would be looking for a job on the outside.

He went to the closet. After sev-

eral failures he found a hat that fitted him. Putting a twenty on the table—the boys would be wanting the hair of the dog that bit them when they awoke—he strode majestically toward the door. The evening was still young. He would go places and do things.

He stood in front of the hotel for a space, thinking. A heavy fog had rolled in, and the streets were wet. A couple of taxis were standing at the curb. Bill got into one of them.

"To the All-Nations Café," he directed.

The café had been aptly named. A water front dive, it was known to seamen the world over. To it came blond Vikings from the north countries, and tawny Kanakas, and stolid Germans, and swarthy sons of Italy, and little, slant-eyed men from the Orient. Here one could get a drink or a fight for the asking.

Bill paused inside the door. There was a bar at one end of the room, a colored orchestra at the other. Couples swayed on the tiny dance floor, which was surrounded on three sides by unpainted tables and rickety chairs. The place reeked with the conglomerate odors of greasy food, poor grade tobacco, and bootleg whisky.

Not far from where Bill stood, a short, paunchy man with long, fierce looking mustaches was arguing with a big, red-faced man whose shoes were broad and square toed.

"I'm tellin' yuh, Nick," the red-faced man was saying, "th' inspector is as sore as hell about that Spick killin'. There ain't no State liquor law or we'd close yur place. That's up to the Feds. But yuh've gotta stop havin' a dozen fights every night, see?"

Nick spread out his hands.

"But what can I do? My customers, they are tough—you know that,

Murphy. And," he waved a hand toward the tables—"the fleet, she is in. The sailors like a fight."

"Just the same, there'll be no more fights!" Murphy snapped. "If a jamboree gets beyond yur waiters, phone us an S. O. S. There'll be a radio car here *poco pronto*! If yuh wanta keep yur license yuh'd better play ball with us, see?"

And with that the man called Murphy strode from the place. Nick lifted his arms heavenward, as if in supplication, then entered a room, the door of which was marked: "Office—Private."

Bill rubbed the mole on his left cheek. Going to jail had not been part of his present plan. Then he shrugged, and turned to survey the café.

SHUFFLE JOE sat at a table bordering the dance floor. With him was a hard-eyed blonde whose chin tilted aggressively. Bill made his way to a table near them. A blowsy-eyed waiter in a soiled apron arrived to take his order.

"A glass of Scotch," Bill said.

The waiter's face muscles twitched. "O. K., fella! Right off the boat!"

When the waiter had departed, chuckling, Bill's eyes went about the room. In spite of Nick's crack about the fleet being in, there were only about a dozen Navy men in the café. Some of them Bill recognized as being from the Columbia. Two or three were from his division. They were whispering and nodding to each other.

"Look at 'is face," one of them wise-cracked audibly. "Looks like he ran afoul a meat chopper."

"He did, sailor," said another. "A two-fisted meat chopper!"

There was a boisterous laugh. Bill's eyes became green, and his hands were

knotted when the waiter brought the liquor. It was of a sickly color and had a vile smell.

Bill turned around in his chair until he faced Shuffle Joe's table. The sailor gave Bill a dark scowl, but the girl—a born flirt—smiled. Bill bowed and lifted his glass. The girl raised hers, and they drank.

Shuffle Joe twisted nervously, but he did not get up. Bill set his glass down with a smile. It was just like he had figured, Shuffle Joe was afraid of him.

"Won't fight unless I make him," Bill told himself. "Well, we'll just make him."

He went over to the sailor's table. A tense, expectant hush settled over the room. A waiter hurried into Nick's office. Bill laid a five-dollar note on the table.

"A five spot that you're afraid to get on your feet, Taylor."

Shuffle Joe's face crimsoned slowly. His big hands became fists.

"I whipped you once to-night," he growled.

"All the more reason why you should get up, if you whipped me on the square—if you didn't hit me after you had cried quits!"

A murmur ran around the room. Shuffle Joe was biting his lips, his expression a strange mixture of anger, fear and dismay.

"Aw, go on away," he urged, "I don't wanta conk yuh again."

Bill fingered the mole on his cheek for an instant, then turned to the girl.

"I'll go," he smiled, "if you'll come with me."

The girl looked her pleasure. She had known bluejackets—lots of them—but this was the first time an officer had ever paid her any attention. She started to rise.

This was too much for Shuffle Joe.

If he let an officer walk away with his girl, he would be laughed out of the Navy. He lurched to his feet.

Bill could not suppress a feeling of admiration. He knew what it was to be afraid—deadly afraid, but still to carry on.

"Scram!" the sailor roared. "Scram, before I lam yuh, Sweet William—"

Bill's right connected with the sailor's chin. Shuffle Joe catapulted over the chair, crashed onto a table. Bottles and glasses rolled to the floor, breaking.

The crowd scattered.

Shuffle Joe got up slowly, but gamely. In a moment they were at it—hammer and tongs. Once more bone crunched against bone.

EVERYTHING was pandemonium. Women screamed. Men struggled to get to the front of the circle that had been formed about the fighters. Waiters, seeking to stop it, were forced back. In the distance came the scream of a police siren.

The two men were fighting fiercely. Finally, Shuffle Joe gave ground, jabbing desperately as he back pedaled. Bill followed him relentlessly. They fell into a clinch, wrestled, then broke away.

The police siren was coming closer and closer.

It galvanized Bill into renewed action. His left whipped out like a snake. His right went home. Shuffle Joe staggered. Bill leaped in close, raining blows.

Brakes screamed in front of the café door. The siren ceased. There were shouts and the sound of pounding feet.

Bill knew it was now or never. He drove a vicious jab to the short-ribs.

It doubled Shuffle Joe up like a jack-knife. Then Bill brought up his right.

Wham!

Shuffle Joe sank down on his haunches, his eyes glassy, his lips twitching. For a split second he sat thus, then crumpled to the floor in an inert heap.

Two burly police officers shoved through the crowd. One of them seized Bill, while the other bent over the unconscious sailor. The tumult slackened, the café became quiet.

The blonde knelt beside Shuffle Joe. Presently he stood up. Some one handed him a drink; he gulped it down eagerly, called for another, which was handed to him.

"All right, yuh birds," ordered one of the cops. "Let's get goin'!"

"Why run me in?" protested Shuffle Joe. "I didn't start it. This guy—"

"Grape juice!" snapped the cop. "I know yuh sailors, I wuz in the Navy wunst."

"I'll bet," Bill spoke up, "that you were kicked out."

The blow went home. The cop wheeled on him. "A sailor, too, in civies, huh? What if I did get a kick-out—it's a rotten outfit!"

"I'll say," said the other cop. "Move on, wise guys! I don't like gobs either."

"One of 'em must have stolen your girl," Shuffle Joe grumbled as the policeman pushed them toward the door. "What a break! Pinched by a couple of gob haters!"

Bill was thinking fast. Unless something happened mighty quick, he and Shuffle Joe were going to be booted out of the Navy themselves. The sailors were following at the heels of the police, murmuring. All they needed to set them in action was a leader—a leader of men. And Captain Porter

had declared that the successful Navy officer must be a leader of men.

THE policeman pushed them out of the café. The fog had turned into a rainlike mist. The sidewalk was wet, slippery!

Bill's eyes burned green with sudden resolve. He lifted his leg higher than necessary for the next step and brought his weight down on his rubber heel. The heel skidded, and he fell, dragging the policeman with him.

And then Bill was astride of him. Taken completely by surprise, the cop never had a chance. His head was slammed down against the pavement. But not too hard! He relaxed with a groan.

Releasing Shuffle Joe, the other policeman rushed at Bill, night stick swinging. But he never reached his objective. Bluejackets are men of action by profession. Now that the ice had been broken they did not need orders.

The policeman went down before their charge. The night stick was torn from his hands. It thudded against his head. He, too, became silent and relaxed.

Bill was on his feet. A shouting crowd was gathering. Nick was jumping up and down, yelling for help.

"Into the police car, men!" Bill shouted. "You, too, blondie!"

They piled into the car. It was only a five passenger vehicle, but somehow the dozen sailors and the girl wedged themselves into it. Bill slid behind the wheel, stepped on the starter.

Around a corner on two wheels, up an alley. Down two blocks, a left turn and they were on Main Street. A traffic light stopped them.

"Bail out, two of you," Bill directed. "Saunter down the street like

you were returning to your ship. The cops can't pinch every gob in town."

"Aye, aye, sir," replied two of the bluejackets, and disembarked.

This was repeated each time Bill had to pause for a traffic signal. Shuffle Joe and the blonde were the last to alight.

The girl gazed at Bill with admiration, while Shuffle Joe shifted his feet self-consciously. Bill broke the awkward silence.

"I'll be up early in the morning, Taylor," he said. "You'd better go back to-night. I want everything clean and ship-shape before quarters."

"You bet, sir," nodded Shuffle Joe. "And—and I was wonderin' if yuh'd let me shake yur hand."

A few minutes later Bill turned the police machine down a deserted side street. Braking the car to a stop, he got out and sauntered back to the corner.

Hailing a passing taxi, he rode down to the naval landing.

"Rotten evenin', ain't it, mister?" voiced the taxi driver.

"On the contrary," Bill chuckled, "it has been a most pleasant evening."

HE recalled those words ruefully shortly after chow the next morning. He had been up since reveille, and he was certain that the fo'c'sle was the cleanest part of the ship. Shuffle Joe had been everywhere at once, ordering, directing, suggesting. Bill was happy, at peace with the world. Then the bomb exploded.

Captain Porter sent for him.

"That cut over your eye," the captain demanded. "How did you get it, Mr. Bentley?"

Before Bill could answer, Captain Porter handed him a copy of a morn-

ing newspaper. The headlines seemed to mock him.

SAILORS RIOT IN ALL-NATIONS CAFE—POLICE OFFICERS ATTACKED

Bill read the article slowly. The last paragraph left him weak, gasping.

Officer Dick Martin is of the opinion that the man who attacked him and Patrolman Jordan was not a civilian, but a naval officer. The police plan a search of all naval craft in the harbor to-day. Martin is certain he will have no trouble in identifying his attacker, as the man had a mole on his left cheek.

Bill felt like a man who has a full house topped by four aces in a poker game. He looked up and was surprised to find Captain Porter regarding him with twinkling eyes.

"Have you had leave this year, Mr. Bentley?"

"Why—why, no, sir."

The captain handed him a paper. It was a fifteen-day leave of absence.

"We sail for Seattle Saturday," Captain Porter continued. "You can report in there. Better get off the ship at once. I saw Taylor on the dock last night, and from his battered face I knew something had happened, so I made him tell me all about it."

Bill struggled to find words to express his thoughts. The captain looked at him sternly.

"That's all, you may go."

Bill saluted, and faced about, his mind a riot of emotions. That two hundred dollars he had won in the poker game would come in handy now. As he opened the door he heard the captain call out to his mess boy.

"Ignacio, wrap up this Chinese frog, and present it to Commander Rainey with my compliments."

THE END.

The Lost Land of Atzlan

By FRED MacISAAC

*Ralph Trainor had found
his companions at last—
trapped by a lost race of
cruel Aztecs*

The girl lifted her
arms in supplication



LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

WHEN a transcontinental passenger airplane became lost just before it was supposed to land at Los Angeles and cruised about in a heavy fog for several hours, the pilot, Billy Upshaw, was glad to land on the first level space that presented itself when the fog lifted.

To his amazement and that of his passengers, he discovered that he had set the plane down on a narrow ledge, high up on a cliff. Included among the occupants of the plane were Harvey Hammond and his daughter Edith, who were using the name of Parke; Ralph Trainor, United States Secret Service operative, trailing the financier, Hammond,

who was wanted for Federal investigation; Professor Eben Goring; Ronald Holt, a dandified movie actor; Tom Peters, grizzled Western mining man; Zoe Calmar, pretty and vivacious French actress, and Mrs. Samuel Rawlins, an over-stuffed, loud-speaking woman who thought the sudden descent an outrage.

The travelers soon learned that they had landed on the desolate and uninhabited reaches of Lower California—

This story began in the Argosy for August 12.

uninhabited except for savages. They were taken captive by a group of light colored Indians, and Professor Goring ventured the conjecture that their captors were Aztecs.

He was right. The white captives were marched inland for several days, came to an impassable cliff—and went through a concealed passage to the other side where was a huge and fertile valley, peopled by direct descendants of the Aztecs who ruled Mexico when the Spaniards came.

Ralph Trainor, who had escaped before the cliff was reached, had followed the party in the hope of releasing his companions. He could not discover the secret of the entrance into the valley, so he plunged into a subterranean river that entered the face of the cliff and got in that way.

Once inside, he came to a house with barred windows. He was peering in at a collection of Christian images when a man approached him from behind. This man, who was an Aztec, called himself Ramon Diaz and told Ralph that he had been educated in the United States. He was guardian of the false gods, as the Aztecs called the images, and he desired to escape from the valley. He agreed to help Ralph attempt to release his friends.

It is fair day in Atzlan, and Edith Hammond and Zoe Calmar are acting as attendants to Manna Ruitza, the queen.

CHAPTER XV.

ONE OF THEM PROSPERS.

EVEN as Edith gazed, one of these figures lifted a slab of wood two feet long and six inches wide upon which was written in big letters, in English: "Cheer Up. On the Job."

"Look! Look!" she exclaimed. "No. Don't look."

But Zoe was gazing wildly about.

"I don't see anything," she whispered. The board with the message had been lowered and the hooded heads were bowed. And at that instant her majesty, having acquired a large gold

watch and an enamel compact, moved on. Her train followed.

"Mr. Trainor," explained Edith softly. "I knew he would come. I'm not afraid now. Everything is going to be all right."

"You saw Mr. Trainor, here?" demanded Zoe. "My dear, are you sure you are not mad?"

The other girl laughed softly. "He was in a tent back there; his face stained dark and another man was with him. And he had a message written on a board which he lifted when he heard his signal. It said, 'Cheer up. On the job.'"

"Look out. You're talking too loud. They're watching us."

Edith laughed excitedly. "But they don't speak English. Oh, Zoe, I'm certain we'll come through all right. I knew Ralph Trainor wouldn't abandon us."

"He is very resourceful," replied Zoe thoughtfully. "But I don't see what he can do. It would take an army to rescue us from this weird place."

"He'll find a way," declared Edith. "You never saw him play football, dear."

"I don't see what football has to do with this situation."

"It makes men fight and never give up. A man has to be a hero to be a great player."

"Well," said Zoe, "he had a chance to escape and he chose to follow us and make his way into this fantastic country. I grant him heroism, but what we need are airplanes equipped with machine guns. I would admire him more if he had made his way to civilization and returned with troops."

"You are cold blooded, you French," replied Edith angrily. "How many men would have been able to escape? And how did he know that we would

be well treated? For all we knew we were going into some Indian village where we would be burned at the stake."

Zoe smiled warmly. "My dear, I do admire him. You are perfectly right. He followed us because he wanted to be at hand in any emergency. With the ingenuity he has already displayed, it is possible he can help us."

"And he admires you," said Edith generously. "He hardly noticed me when we were in that prison in the village. He talked with you every chance he got."

"Probably because I was alone and you were with your father."

"No-o. He liked you. I could see it. I do hope that they are being kind to father and the others. They don't seem at all wicked; just the ordinary human kind of people."

"Yes," said Zoe slowly. "I have noticed a few things that seem sinister, but we have nothing of which to complain."

BACK in the tent Ralph Trainor was cutting up the board into small pieces lest any part of his message betray him. He and Diaz sat behind a rude table upon which were displayed beads, carved gourds and cheap pottery which the Mexican had secured as an excuse to set up a tent at the fair. Their display was so unattractive that they had drawn no customers, which suited their purpose perfectly.

"Let's be going," proposed Ralph. "Miss Hammond got my message and that's all I hoped to accomplish here. Did you ever in your life see such gorgeous hair?"

"Never," replied Diaz. "But I thought the French girl was more beautiful."

"Well, perhaps she is. I prefer her, myself, but it was the other girl who was on the *qui vive*."

"Having told them to cheer up, perhaps you will tell me how we are going to help them."

"Everything has broken right so far. Let's be on our way."

"Impossible. We would create suspicion if we left before night. We are merchants, my friend, and having secured a location we can't abandon it."

"I suppose you're right. Look. The queen is leaving. If I could only whisk those girls up and hop into an airplane."

"I have been wishing for miracles for twenty-five years," replied Diaz. "None have happened. I think—regard, *señor*. Over there."

He pointed to another corner of the market place and Ralph stared.

"By heavens!" he exclaimed. "It's Ronald Holt. And he's walking around loose, having a good time. Say, I thought you said—"

"Be silent, please. Watch."

A richly dressed group had entered the square and were moving leisurely in the direction of the tent where the conspirators were concealed.

At their head was the handsome Ronald Holt, idol of several million female American film fans. He wore a wreath of bright flowers on his sleek black hair. Over his shoulders was a multicolored feather mantle. As he strode along his fine, tanned bare legs pushed the robe aside. On his feet were gold colored sandals. Two youths behind him were playing on flutes and several dark maidens richly dressed clasped hands and danced in a ring around him. People came running from all sides, waving their arms lustily and cheering him.

A merchant rushed up to him and deftly tossed a gold chain around his neck. The actor acknowledged the courtesy with a graceful wave of the hand, but one of the young men accompanying him came forward and took from a bag several tokens with which he paid for the chain.

Ronald's laugh rang out musically and he kissed his hands to the dancing damsels, tore one of them loose from the throng and attempted to foxtrot with her. The girl was willing, but didn't know the steps. He laughed and moved along, gazing curiously at the various booths.

"Having the time of his life," murmured Ralph Trainor. "Now what do you know about that?"

"This was one of your companions?" asked Diaz.

"The film actor I told you of. The cowardly rat who stayed in the hut when the rest of us tried to beat up the villagers. If this is the way they are treating my crowd, I've done a lot of useless worrying."

"The fate of the women depends upon the whim of the queen," said Diaz gravely. "The men, with the exception of this one, will be offered up to Huitzilopotchli within two weeks. This one is the personification of the god Tezcalipoca, the creator. Only a male captive of great personal beauty and without a blemish is so chosen. He is honored wherever he goes; he has his choice of women even up to the rank of princess for wives; he may choose four. He is invited to all banquets and festivals and given the seat of honor."

DIAZ laughed sardonically. "Being unfamiliar with the language and customs of the Aztecs, he may well enjoy himself. However, if he is intelligent he will, in time, learn a

little of the language and then he will not be happy."

"Why?"

"On a lower island is the temple of Tezcalipoca. At the end of a year he will be led to a boat in a joyous procession, but at the boat he will bid farewell to his wives; his fine raiment will be removed and he will be in the hands of the priests. They will conduct him to the temple which is on top of a low terraced pyramid. The whole population will applaud him as he mounts the pyramid, if he goes up like a hero—and on the altar he will have his heart cut from his body, like any other victim."

Ralph grew white as Diaz explained.

"I don't like him," Ralph muttered, "but we can't have that. No, we can't have that."

"They have not had a Tezcalipoca for fifteen years," said Diaz. "Therefore they will try to make your friend very happy during his span of life."

An old woman approached, inspected a display of fruit, asked prices and informed Diaz that he was a thief, after which she moved away. The Mexican deliberately had selected goods not likely to be in demand and asked higher prices for them than people were apt to pay, in order to avoid a rush of business. He and Trainor had crossed the causeway with the mob of country people coming in with produce in the morning and they had escaped attention from the city guards thereby. When it was dark they planned to abandon their unsold goods and reconnoiter the town and the great building which was palace, temple and prison combined.

It was no expectation of communicating with any of the prisoners which had brought them to the market place. The appearance of the girls had been

a stroke of fortune of which Ralph had been quick to take advantage, while the spectacle of the god Tezcalipoca, otherwise Ronald Holt, was something they had not anticipated.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PYRAMID OF SKULLS.

THREE days had elapsed since Ralph Trainor had committed himself to the swift underground river, and in his optimism he thought that much had been accomplished.

The way of escape was open. Upon the second day, just after dark, the village Aztecs had departed, escorted by a body of troops who left them a few hundred yards from the cliff beneath which the river entered the valley. Conducted by a priest in a white robe, with two torch bearers, they mounted the mass of rocks on the left side of the river and descended a path almost at the face of the cliff.

At a command from the priest the warriors fell upon their faces, and while the torch bearers turned their backs, the priest knelt down, scraped away a mass of pebbles and revealed a box which contained a lever. A slight push and a curtain of rock eight feet high by six feet wide moved aside and revealed a huge opening into the cliff.

Another command and the outlanders entered in single file. When the last man had passed through, the priest, from his position ten feet to the right of the opening, caused the rock portal to close. And a dozen feet behind the pontiff lay Ralph Trainor, with alert eyes.

After waiting a full hour, the young detective crept forward, located the mass of loose pebbles and broken rock

which concealed the box, lifted its cover and grasped the metal lever. He pushed. Nothing happened. He pulled and the portal opened. With a glad laugh he closed the door of escape, replaced the cover on the box and pushed the gravel back into place.

Later that night he conducted Diaz to the spot and showed him the hidden mechanism.

"In case I get bumped off and you don't," he explained.

"My friend," replied the Mexican, "we live or die together."

During their journey to the city next morning Trainor had scrutinized everything with the observing eye of a man who had been a newspaper reporter and was now a Federal detective. There was plenty to astonish him, not the least of which were the mountain sheep, peculiar to the peninsula, which had big horns and did not bear wool. Diaz, however, assured him that, despite their lack of wool, they were sheep, since their flesh tasted like mutton.

Ralph observed that the narrow roadway upon which they traveled was a pavement of greenish cement; that many houses were built on piles in the shallow lake and almost concealed by the tall shrubs which flourished because of the extreme shallowness of the water.

He saw that few of the houses had doors and none had glass in the windows, but that mattings covered door and window openings, and he asked eagerly if the palace was no better protected.

"There are no doors on the outside of the state building," Diaz assured him, "and the windows are eight feet above the ground. There is but one entrance, through a gate of solid bronze. All the apartments open upon the inner

court, so it doesn't matter to you whether there are solid doors or mats."

The city of Atzlan was built upon an island nearly two miles long and from half a mile to a mile wide. The lake which contained the island appeared to be about three or four miles long. While the city gave the appearance of great size, Ralph noted that, off from the main street, the houses were small, of only one story and were set in gardens so that the city's area was several times as great as that of a closely built town of five thousand people.

"A KING ought to have a hard time putting up a front on the revenues of this little country," he remarked.

"It is old Mexico in miniature, of course," admitted Diaz. "His majesty, however, owns his subjects body and soul and maintains himself elaborately."

"Shall we get a glimpse of the old boy?"

"No. He shows himself only upon important feast days."

"How old is he?"

"About forty, I believe."

"Ugh. I hope he doesn't take a fancy to either of the girls."

Diaz smiled. "The queen will probably see that he doesn't," he replied. "We are early at the market place and we can pick our location."

They proceeded to unload the heavy packs they had carried on their backs, and in a few minutes were ready to open up shop. At Ramon's suggestion, Ralph had retreated to the back of the tent. His six foot stature might well attract attention among a people whose tallest were five or six inches shorter than he.

Night came at last and, with the horde of hucksters, the allies knocked down the supports of their cotton cover,

but, unlike them, dumped their unsold rubbish on the ground and departed.

Atzlan had no street lighting system, and the dark came suddenly in that latitude. Although there were numerous city guardsmen armed with swords, the people rapidly disappeared from the streets and those who were visible were scurrying off.

"They fear thieves," said Diaz, "and, perhaps, the city guards are the biggest thieves."

"Let's get a look at the palace," pleaded Ralph. "How do we get there?"

"Better approach it from the rear," replied Diaz. "It fronts on a big square and there will be many guards about."

They moved through dark, bad smelling streets, evidently a low quarter, for the houses were one room affairs and their inhabitants, nearly naked, were visible by firelight or torchlight as they squatted on mats and partook of their evening meal.

"Mexican Indians haven't changed much in four hundred years," remarked Diaz bitterly. "All over the mainland you will see sights like this. Spanish civilization is a very thin veneer."

"At least they live in houses, not in wigwams, and the people in the market place were clean."

"An Aztec, not a Spanish virtue. There are many public baths in Atzlan."

"Aside from their religion, your ancestors were rather unusual," commented Ralph. "Just the same, it's no place for white people."

"Or for Cornell Indians," added Diaz. "Just ahead is the rear of the palace. Now what do you propose?"

"To get inside."

"I tell you it's impossible. And if you do get in, you'll never get out."

"We'll never accomplish anything by looking at stone walls without trying to go over them," replied Trainor cheerfully. They stood in a narrow lane at the rear of a line of small houses whose fronts were upon a parallel street.

They gazed upon a solid structure, the extent of which was very great, its extremities lost in the darkness.

"What's in there?" demanded Trainor.

"I don't know. Barracks, perhaps, or dormitories for priests, or store-rooms. I have been in the quarters of the high priest and in the audience hall of the king, which are in the front of the building."

Ralph studied the façade and observed many window openings, the sills of which were eight or nine feet from the ground.

"All dark," he commented. "It's too early for the folks to have turned in, so the rooms must be unoccupied."

Instead of replying, Diaz grasped his arm. "Quick, the guard!" he exclaimed, and drew his friend into a passage leading to the parallel street.

RALPH went willingly, having heard the clank of metal. A moment later a file of soldiers passed, naked save for shoulder capes and loin cloths. There were ten men, carrying pikes, and an officer in a long cloak with drawn sword. They passed without looking to left or right.

"Fine," said Trainor. "It will take them ten or fifteen minutes to march around this establishment. Diaz, I'm going through one of those windows."

"I implore you!"

"Let me get on your shoulders and then straighten up. Then get your hands around my ankles and lift me. I'll make it all right."

"Yes, but you will never come out, my friend."

"If I don't, you know the way out of the valley."

"I would enter with you, but there is no one to lift me up."

"I know you would. Shake, old man. And if we don't meet again I hope you bring back an army to wipe these vermin out."

"I shall," said Diaz grimly.

Ralph felt his loin cloth. Fastened inside were the automatic, fully loaded, and the flashlight which he had taken from Lung-Ho that night on the mesa.

"Let's try this window," he said, pointing directly ahead. "It's as good as the next one. It isn't barred."

Diaz made no further protest. He crouched below the wall and Ralph leaped upon his shoulders, steadying himself against the side of the building.

"Ally oop," he whispered. Diaz, crushed beneath his weight, by a supreme effort, managed to stand upright. Ralph reached up, caught the sill of the window opening and easily pulled himself up with his powerful arms. He sat on the ledge, which was a foot broad, swung his feet through the two-foot opening and then—

From the passage from which they had emerged a moment before came a soldier with leveled lance.

"Look out!" breathed Trainor. Diaz heard, whirled and his knife flashed in his hand. But a six foot spear was within a couple of feet of his breast.

Trainor jerked out his automatic and fired one shot.

With a yip of astonishment and pain the soldier plunged forward and Diaz streaked it along the lane. Bedlam broke loose. The report of the pistol, a sound never before heard, perhaps, within the precincts of Atzlan, awak-

ened the neighborhood and women were shrieking and men were shouting.

With an imprecation, Trainor lowered himself inside and dropped to the floor, where he landed noiselessly because it was of earth. He stood tense, weapon in hand, listening. Without all was uproar; the night was being made hideous by shrieks and cries. They had found the soldier. If he wasn't dead he would report that a man had gone through a palace window, but Ralph thought he was dead. He had fired from less than ten feet, and the man had been hit in the chest. He hoped Diaz had escaped, for he could do nothing more for him. In the meantime, where had he arrived and who were the occupants of the place?

Empty. The hubbub without would certainly have interested any tenants.

FOR fully a quarter of an hour he stood where he had landed, hardly daring to breathe and hearing no sound in the room. Outside the racket was subsiding. Any of the residents of the houses near the wall who had been gazing toward the palace would have seen the flash of fire from the window, but, apparently, the window had not come under suspicion.

Presently all was still. No doubt the dead sentinel had been carried away and search for the murderer was being made in other quarters. Gingerly he drew the flashlight from his pocket and ventured to drop its circle of light upon the floor a few feet in front of him. The light brought no consequences. He moved it more freely. It struck against the blackened stone of the opposite wall fully forty feet away. He stepped forward and stumbled against a metal grille. It explained why the window was unprotected. It had fallen inside unnoticed.

Ah, there was something in that corner. He moved forward and threw the beam fully upon the corner. And then his hair stood on end and cold sweat broke out all over his body.

There lay a human skeleton in chains—and the skeleton had no head.

He was in a charnel house—a dungeon where a man was left in chains until all his flesh rotted and only the bones remained. The head had rolled away. Where was it? Shaking in every limb, he moved the beam around. For some reason he felt he must find the head. Right, left.

In the middle of the dungeon was a white pyramid, six feet high, and it was composed of hundreds of grinning human skulls.

With a great effort he regained control of himself. The unexpectedness of the spectacle almost forced from him a howl of terror.

"Nice people," he muttered with a forced laugh. "Oh, a lovely, kindly, gentle race of people, damn them. I've got to get out of here."

Again he moved his flashlight and discovered, far over, close to the inner wall of the big room, a door. It was a solid looking door. And Diaz had stated that few of the buildings in Atzlan had doors. Of course they had to prevent the skulls from leaving.

While Ralph had demonstrated in the last few days that he was a man of extraordinary courage, his teeth were chattering as he moved toward the door.

The tips of his fingers touched it. Solid, thick. He was imprisoned with the skulls and the skeleton that had no skull. He would have to go back through the window if he could find a way to get up there, and no doubt there was a close watch outside since the killing.

With an impulse of despair he drove his shoulder against the door. It yielded and fell and he plunged through the opening with it.

Like a cat, he picked himself up and listened. No sound.

He dared to use the flash and he found himself in a corridor which ran from inner to outer wall. At his right was another door opening, but this was closed by matting which quivered in the gentle breeze from out of doors.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHICH GIRL?

HE lifted an edge of the matting and found that it gave access to a great inner courtyard in the center of which lifted the huge terraced pyramid which he had seen from the upper end of the valley. It was truncated—flat on top—and he knew what was up there—the altar of Huitzilopotchli.

He heard the tramp of feet upon the solidly packed earth. The guards were moving about. Dropping the mat, he considered for a moment. This section of the building was probably unoccupied—the fact that the chained skeleton and the skulls were in the room behind him seemed to indicate it. Most likely this whole side of the palace was unused. Probably the king of fifteen thousand people had all the room he wanted in the front of the palace.

If he could creep around by the building wall he might find the prison of his companions over there. He slipped out of doors and stood undecided in the dark. No moon, no stars. He saw torches away across the court, but there were no lights on this side; and no lights streaming from the windows.

He was nearer the left side wall of

the palace than the right, and he moved toward the left. Very slowly he crept along. It took him ten minutes, creeping like a shadow, to reach the angle of the building at the left, and as he approached he saw light after light which had been shining through window openings in this wing go out.

While it was early in the evening the occupants of the palace were going to sleep. Of course! He was back in the dark ages. People rose with the sun and went to bed soon after nightfall in the period when illumination was primitive.

He became aware that he was moving on thick grass instead of earth. He stumbled upon something with thorns—a rose bush by the sharpness of the thorns. Yes, his hand brushed a flower whose shape was unmistakable.

There were frequent door openings covered with matting. People sleeping inside. He must go quietly.

Clink, clink, clink.

Shadows ahead and coming his way. He turned back. *Clink, clink.* Men with weapons behind him. He hesitated a second and then lifted a door mat and slipped inside. Immediately he was aware of heavy breathing—he was in an occupied room. He held his own breath. Outside the guard from either direction was at hand. It halted. Peering through the mat, the round shield of a soldier was within reach of his arm if he stretched it out. There was a guttural word of command and the two parties moved on, but they had stationed a soldier directly in front of the room in which he had taken refuge.

Behind him he heard a slight movement. Neatly trapped. He was unaware that he was breathing hard with excitement.

"Who's there?"

It was a low, sharp, frightened gasp from within a few feet. A woman's alarmed interrogation. Next she would scream. Yet she had spoken English!

"A friend," he whispered hoarsely. "Who are you? Quick!"

There was a second's pregnant silence. "Is it Mr. Trainor?" she asked very softly.

"Yes. Miss Calmar?"

"Oh, thank God. I knew you would come. It's not Zoe. I'm Edith Parke."

"Where are you?"

A HAND touched his arm. A slender figure stood beside him. "I'm used to the dark," she said sibilantly. "I saw you come in. I hoped it was you."

The heavy breathing continued. "Who else is here?" he asked nervously.

"The French girl. She is in a deep sleep. Come away. The soldier may hear us."

She clutched his sleeve and drew him across a big room to the farther wall. "Wait. I shall get you a chair," she said. She glided off and a second later she set a stool before him and pressed him into it and then sank upon the floor beside him. He could see that she wore a long white robe and that her hair hung in a cloud over her shoulders.

"Now we can talk," she said with a contented sigh. "Since I read your message I have been certain that you would manage to help us. Have you seen my father?"

"Not yet. I blundered in here. The guards were coming and I slipped through the nearest door."

"Providence guided you," she said confidently. "I know you would prefer to talk to Zoe, but I am afraid I can't wake her."

"Why not?"

"They gave us some bitter wine with our dinner. She drank too much of it and I think there must be some powerful drug in it. Hear her?"

"She's out, all right," he said. "I've heard a lot of men sleep like that."

"Are you secure from intrusion, Miss Parke?"

"Yes. There is a sentinel at our door, but nobody enters. Tell me, did you find my handkerchief with the message outside that mountain wall?"

"I found it a few hours after you had passed through."

"I knew you would follow us. I told Zoe that you were certain to come, because you were absolutely fearless."

"You're quite wrong about that, Miss Parke, but what made you think so?"

"Oh, I knew about you. I recognized you in the cabin of the plane."

"Indeed," he said uneasily. How did she know who he was? Had her father been aware that a Federal detective was flying west with him?

"I saw you play football for Northwestern. I was going to Chicago University then. I saw you often."

"Oh," he replied, much relieved. "And did Miss Calmar share your confidence?"

"Well, yes, of course, but she hoped that you had made for the Mexican cities to get help, because the odds were so greatly against you. She said that you could do nothing, even if you found the way into the valley, but I told her you were as ingenious as you were courageous."

BEING human, the girl's confidence in him pleased Ralph, but he felt called upon to protest.

"You flatter my courage and cleverness, I am afraid," he said. "Miss Cal-

mar couldn't realize that I had no knowledge of where we were when I escaped and, for all I knew, there were several hundreds of miles of mountain and desert between me and the big towns. I'm afraid I would have died of hunger and thirst if I had attempted to reach them. I followed the caravan because there was nothing else to do."

"And you found the way into this valley."

"No, I didn't."

"But how did you get here?"

"I let the river bring me in," he said modestly.

She gasped. "You mean you went underground with the river? Ralph Trainor, I think you are the bravest man who ever lived!"

"Or the most foolish," he said, grinning.

She sighed. "You must love her very much."

"Who?"

"Zoe. No man would dream of taking such a horrible chance except for the woman he loved."

Ralph was silent. Zoe's heavy breathing was the only sound.

"I'm not in love with her," he said truthfully. "I was in a situation where I would perish anyway and I might as well wind up trying to help the white men and women who were in the hands of the savages. I don't deserve any credit."

The girl didn't reply, but she found his hand and pressed it.

"They haven't ill treated you, I hope," he said after a few seconds.

"No," she replied. "They are quite kind to us. We only wear chains when we go out into the city like today, and they are not heavy. I do not think these people are savages. The queen's apartments are lovely. I am trying to learn their language so I can find out

about father and the other men, but so far I have learned only a few words. It seems a very difficult tongue. Zoe says the professor told her it is Aztec and that these people live as they did in the days of Montezuma."

"Yes. The clock has been turned back four hundred years."

"It will be thrilling to remember when we are back in the United States."

As they talked a silver light had crept into the room through a high window above them and it was possible to secure an idea of the surroundings. To his surprise, Ralph saw that the walls were hung with bright colored cloths and there were colored mats on the floor. He saw the graceful figure of Zoe Calmar lying upon cushions a dozen feet away, a quilted cotton cover over her which she had rolled back to the waist. Her back was toward him and it was nude, but veiled in part by masses of thick black hair.

And the soft magic light showed him the girl at his feet with wide blue eyes and hair like a bright halo and eager wistful mouth; a girl who was gazing up at him with perturbing confidence, who had packed up her troubles and fears and, figuratively speaking, had placed them upon his broad back and now was as serene as a hostess entertaining a young man in her apartment.

IN truth, his appearance had convinced Edith that their rescue was a mere matter of detail. Her soft white mantle clung to her and revealed the fine lines of her figure. Her neck was slender, her little head poised on it regally; in fact, this girl, whom he had hardly noticed because the vivid beauty of the French film actress had absorbed him during the airplane journey and the first morning of their cap-

tivity, revealed herself now as she really was and rendered more seductive by the exoticness of their surroundings.

"The moon," she said softly. "The same moon which is shining on Palm Beach and Santa Barbara and in the cañons of New York. If you had not escaped, Mr. Trainor, I should have gone mad during the last part of our journey here. With you at liberty, I knew that we would not long be prisoners."

"I appreciate that," he said unsteadily, "but this isn't a question of winning a football game. And while the moon is beautiful it is going to shine all night and ruins my prospect of getting out of this place."

"I know we shall get out," she said firmly.

"Tell me what your daily life is. Does the queen leave the palace with her retinue every day?"

"Today was the first time."

"Where are her quarters?"

She pointed to the left. "Down that way. About six doors down. Her women sleep in the rooms between."

"And the king?"

"I don't know. I haven't even seen him."

"Well," he said reluctantly, "I've got to make a break for it now."

"I'll try to wake Zoe."

"No, no, let her sleep."

"But we are going with you!" she exclaimed.

"My dear young lady, I don't know where I'm going. If I did manage to effect your escape, don't you see they would realize that enemies had penetrated into the palace and it would be impossible to help your father and the others? Somehow I have to arrange to get you all away together."

"Of course. I didn't think. How shall you arrange it?"

"Well, I've got to reconnoiter. I must find out where they are confined. It was only by accident that I discovered you. And it may take a few days before an opportunity offers. Keep up your courage."

"With your example, do you suppose I shall be afraid again?"

"Miss Ham—er—Parke, you're a remarkable girl."

Her fingers gripped his wrist. "You know my real name!" she exclaimed anxiously. "How do you know?"

"Your father is a famous man. I've seen him," he said uncomfortably.

"Oh. Then you know father is in trouble. Through no fault of his, his companies have failed and they blame him. He was in danger of being arrested on false charges. That is why we left New York under assumed names. A yacht was to meet us in San Pedro harbor and we were going out of the country so that father might be free to advise the officers of his business enterprises without being imprisoned."

She choked on the last word and her eyes filled with tears.

"Well, he'll probably pull through all right," said Ralph consolingly. "I don't dare stay here any longer. I'll have to risk that sentinel outside. Damn that moonlight."

"Wait," she said. "Perhaps the roof would be better."

"Is there any way to get there?"

"Of course. Come. Shall I try to awaken Zoe? She will be heart-broken—"

"No she won't. And I don't think you can wake her for hours. I know the symptoms."

Edith rose and glided to the right, past the pile of cushions on which the French girl was sleeping so deeply. She lifted one of the wall hangings

and disclosed a narrow hallway with a stone staircase leading upwards.

"There is a mat which conceals the doorway," she said. "Shall I come with you?"

"No. If I am caught you might be punished."

"I'm not afraid."

"Good-bye," he said and put out his hand. The girl squeezed it in both her hands and, to his astonishment, bent over and kissed it.

"Here, here," he protested.

"God go with you," she murmured, and fled.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ROOFTOP TRAGEDY.

RALPH went up the stone steps until progress was blocked by a wooden frame covered with rush matting. He pushed against it and it lifted. Cautiously he thrust his head through the opening. It seemed to him that he was looking into a garden instead of at a roof. There was a huge flat expanse carpeted with thick grass, and tall shrubs formed winding hedges. He realized that there was a foot of earth upon the surface of the roof, which was a gigantic hanging garden.

"Another break," he muttered as he pulled himself through the opening and replaced the frame over the skylight.

He sat down on the grass and tried to orient himself. He was young and therefore affected by the incident below. He was a little intoxicated by the pressure of fresh young lips upon his big hand and thrilled by the intimacy of the situation. He was glad Zoe had not awakened. Lovely as she was, she would have made the experience less romantic. He marveled that the Hammond girl had remembered him since

the days when he was a football hero, a period which life had very nearly obliterated from his mind.

And he was troubled by her confidence in his invulnerability and his genius. It was a situation which was practically hopeless. His prospects of escaping from the palace with his own life were scant and of carrying off the eleven white prisoners nil. Well, he had given Edith hope, which was something, and, in some unforeseen manner, his opportunity might present itself.

The roof was about forty feet wide, with a high parapet upon the outer side and a low one upon the court side. It extended right and left indefinitely. There were stone seats scattered about on the lawn. On hot nights the Aztec ladies who slept below came up here to enjoy fresh air and the scent of flowers and the moon and the stars. This was a cold night and Ralph, in the cotton cape and loin cloth of the country, shivered slightly.

It was impossible to have a clear view of the roof because of the hedges, which were fully four feet tall, but they would be helpful to prevent him from being seen. He approached the outer parapet and looked over its edge. The city spread out dark and silent. He could discern only half a dozen points of light in its entire extent. He heard voices below; probably city guards passing time in conversation, but, though he leaned over, he could not discover them.

It was fifteen or sixteen feet from the top of the parapet to the ground. Ralph, who had been a high jumper, had no doubt he could make it in safety and he was tempted to escape now while the opportunity offered.

However, he had permitted Edith to think he was hopeful of effecting a rescue and he had not yet discovered

where the white men were imprisoned. When he was forced to he would drop from the parapet into the broad avenue below.

HE moved toward the other wall. From here he had a fine view of the pyramid. From base to top it was about sixty or seventy feet, and there was a small building on its flattened top. There was a light up there; priests on vigil who might see him prowling on the palace roof.

He had a sharp knife tucked in his loin cloth with his automatic and it gave him comfort to touch them.

At the side of the pyramid nearest him he saw a squad of soldiers seated or lying and he could see erect forms standing alert before many door openings in the court below. From his position he could not see a light in any of the windows of the palace.

He could form some idea of the extent of the building, however. It was a great square three or four hundred yards on a side and big enough, he conjectured, to house the entire population of Atzlan. Probably its total population could not be more than five or six hundred persons. The royal guard wasn't apt to be more than two or three hundred strong.

He began to move toward the right, hand on the hilt of his knife. Except as a last resort he dared not use the pistol again. He encountered nobody. It was not a night for reposing upon a roof. After traversing a hundred yards he found progress blocked by a stone wall five feet high. Looking over it he saw many cushions strewn about on the grass, several stone seats and, some distance farther, an awning.

"Reserved for royalty," he murmured and threw a leg over it. He dropped noiselessly upon the grass and

became aware of a murmur of voices, one of them a woman's.

On hands and knees he crept toward the sound and paused behind a low hedge beyond which was the canopy.

He heard the woman talking rapidly in low tones, it sounded as though she were pleading. A harsh monosyllable silenced her.

There was a mass of brightly colored cushions just beyond and facing him, kneeling upon the grass, was a woman, naked except for a brief scarf about her waist. In the moonlight he saw that she was beautiful. A man was standing with his back to the American. He wore a long red mantle. As Ralph gazed the girl spread her arms wide open and lifted her head. And the man's right hand lifted and there was a knife in it.

"Stop that," shouted Trainor, forgetting time and place, everything except what was about to take place. He cleared the hedge with a bound and drew his knife. But the other knife had fallen. With a moan the girl fell sideways while blood spurted from her bosom. The murderer turned.

From his throat came a blood curdling yell and he rushed at the intruder with the knife he had torn from the wound in the young girl's breast.

But Ralph was upon him and his knife was buried in the chest of the man whose rush he had agilely sidestepped.

From the roof beyond came answering howls, and men who had been sitting or lying down appeared; half a dozen of them, spearmen.

TRAINOR rushed for the parapet, swung himself over and dropped.

He landed with the spring of a jumper. His knees spread as his body sank and his head dropped between his

knees. In a flash he was up and running desperately. The moon betrayed his features to the Aztecs, who dared not leap after him but who were making the night hideous with their howls.

Answering shouts came from up and down the street.

Trainor reached an intersection, turned the corner and ran with winged feet. Presently he came to a region of garden houses, leaped a low wall, rushed around a stone house and found himself in a large garden at the rear. He leaped a hedge separating it from a garden behind a house on the next street and continued across lots until he came to a ten foot wall which blocked farther progress. It was part of the city wall, beyond which was the thick, junglelike growth upon the edge of the lake.

The hue and cry was no longer heard, but when morning came they would catch him. His unusual height made him easy to distinguish. He looked about desperately and discovered, a little distance to the right, a shed which some householder had built against the city wall. Ralph was on the roof of the shed and in a second on the wall. Beyond was at least ten feet of thick shrubbery.

He leaped into it, was scratched by thorns and tangled in creepers, and it took him ten minutes to burst through, whereupon he fell into the lake. The water was shallow close to the shore, but deeper farther out, and he was forced to swim. In two or three minutes he crawled out upon the mainland.

A glance gave him his bearings. Far off at the right, and very high up, was a dull reddish cloud—reflection of the fires in the depth of the volcano. The prison of the false gods was along the lake shore in the opposite direction.

He moved upon the deserted road

at a jog trot for some minutes and then became aware that a fire was leaping high from the summit of the pyramid of the war god. A beacon fire. The country was probably being warned to look out for a fugitive.

However, the countryside was fast asleep, and during the time it took him to reach his haven he encountered nobody and saw no signs of life in the houses he passed.

In the small hours of the morning he entered the house of the warden of the false gods and touched the sleeping Mexican on the shoulder.

DIAZ sprang up, instantly alert.

"My friend!" he exclaimed and embraced the American with agitation. "I never thought to look upon your face again."

"Well," said Ralph, grinning, "I wasn't at all sure I'd find you, old boy. How did you get out of the city?"

"Climbed the wall and swam for it."

"Same here. I'm dead tired and starving."

"I'll find you some food. Fortunately there is moonlight. I would not wish to light a lamp. Did you have any luck? What happened?"

"Well, I found the girls. I had a long talk with the blond one. That's a wonderful girl, Diaz."

"No doubt. Did you locate the men?"

"Well, I had an accident. I had to kill a fellow and jump from the roof of the palace. There's the devil to pay about it. He must have been a big wig."

Diaz thrust bread and a jug of pulque into his hands.

"That settles any slight hope we might have," he declared. "And the killing of that guardsman with a pistol bullet informs them that an enemy is within their gates."

"It can't be helped," said Ralph. "That fellow was going to impale you. I had to shoot him."

"I'm very grateful. Please tell me about the other affair."

He listened to the narrative with growing agitation.

"Well," said Trainor finally, "what do you think?"

"I don't dare to think," replied the Mexican. "Undoubtedly you blundered into the royal inclosure. You say the woman was nude and he slew her. And she didn't struggle?"

"Spread out her arms and gazed up at him as though the beast was doing her a favor."

"By all the saints," exclaimed Diaz, "you have killed or wounded the king of Atzlan."

"I don't regret it," said Trainor sullenly. "He had it coming to him. What makes you think it was the king?"

"After the king has made love to a concubine not of royal blood he slays her because she is unworthy of the honor."

"Sort of a male Cleopatra," Ralph said with a grimace of disgust.

"But the consequences!"

"It looks to me as though they aren't any worse than what we have coming to us anyway. We're a couple of doomed men, according to you, so what the devil? Maybe the new king will be grateful, eh?"

"It might have been one of the princes who took that way to cover up an intrigue, but he hardly would have soldiers in waiting. I shudder to think of what you have done, my friend."

"If murdering his lady friend is a time honored custom," said Ralph with some chagrin, "I'm sorry I happened to be in the vicinity—that is, if it will make the work I've got to do tougher than it was."

"We won't be able to obtain access to the city and never again will you get inside the palace walls. In the search for the murderer they might even violate the sanctity of this grove. The priests put the interdict upon it and can take it off."

"I'm not leaving here without Edith—I mean without my friends."

"I know your determination," said Diaz sadly. "Unfortunately you have probably hastened their end. The king will be buried in a few days and there will be many human sacrifices to help him on his journey to the sun. Lie down and sleep. I'll venture out and try to learn what has actually happened."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ROYAL HAREM.

KING MATZLA THE FOURTH of Atzlan was dead and his son, Matzla the Fifth, was king. And the new ruler issued orders to capture his father's murderer and sacrifice him and his wives and children and kindred to the gods upon the day of his father's funeral.

All the troops of the kingdom were spreading over the city and the country with no clear idea of who the murderer might be, and the king was having conferences with Cozumel, the high priest of the war god, and with the judges and the council while the members of the royal bodyguard who had permitted the king to be slain had been questioned by torture and then thrown into prison to await sacrifice.

The apprehensions of Ralph Trainor and Ramon Diaz would have been greatly relieved if they had known that there was not the slightest suspicion that his majesty had been slain because

he had killed a concubine after signally honoring her, since none of the high officials of the nation supposed that there could be such a motive for the crime. Nor did they dream that there was a white man at large in Atzlan.

The white prisoners had been counted and all were present in their dungeon. The warriors who had delivered them with Lung-Ho's batch of twenty yellow men had departed before the royal murder and it could not have been one of them; therefore it must have been a native rebel or an assassin hired by some noble who had a grievance against his royal majesty.

Light might have been shed upon the situation had the Royal Council known that one of the white prisoners had escaped within a day's march of the entrance to the sacred valley of Atzlan, but as the punishment for losing a prisoner would have been sacrifice to Huitzilopotchli the Aztecs who had delivered the prisoners had been careful not to report the escape. Lung-Ho they had reported to have fallen from an eminence and broken his neck and they had preserved themselves from calamity by bringing in the assortment of Chinamen whom he had expected to deliver in person.

A sentinel had been killed by a white man's bullet in the street behind the palace and this fact was before the Council, but its judgment was that the shot had been fired by the assassin of his majesty, who had stolen it from the royal arsenal. As only priests and the king had access to the arsenal, there was reason to suppose it was a priest who had committed the crime. The king and high priest and judges were earnestly discussing which of more than two hundred priests might have been mad enough to cherish malice against the divine ruler of Atzlan.

The young King of Atzlan was twenty years of age. He was a low browed, fat youth with the broad hooked nose and high cheek bones of his father and thick straight hair. His complexion was dark brown. He wore a feather robe of rare brilliancy and beauty which had been brought from Mexico when his ancestors had fled the country and founded the new Atzlan in the interior of Lower California. As birds of bright plumage were rare in Atzlan, the few feather robes which existed were worn only by royalty and such persons as Ronald Holt, who was temporarily the favorite of the gods.

NOR was the magnificence of his court and palace in any way comparable with that of his royal ancestors in Mexico. His council hall was spacious, but its ornamentation was comparatively crude. He sat on a pile of cushions while the high priest and the judges and councilors stood respectfully before him, and the robes of these were somber in contrast to the splendor of his majesty.

The young man listened without great interest to the solemn discussion. He was thinking that he would throw his five half-brothers into prison as quickly as possible lest one of them dispute the throne which had so unexpectedly come to him. Naturally he would punish the slayer of his parent as cruelly as possible, but secretly he considered that he had been done a service. There was something else on his mind, and he was impatient for the conference to end.

When finally the elders had prostrated themselves before him and departed he summoned his chamberlain.

"Tell my royal mother that I want the three white women slaves sent to me at once," he commanded.

While he waited he smoked a pipe presented to him by an attendant and enjoyed the sensation of being ruler of the world of Atzlan.

"I shall receive them in my private salon," he said after a few minutes. "Have them brought there."

The king's salon was a large room, the walls of which were covered, not with dyed cotton drapes but cloths of gold embroidery. There were a number of low wide stools used throughout Atzlan instead of chairs, various low tables including a magnificent one of Chinese workmanship, a present to his late majesty from Lung-Ho, who had found it exceedingly profitable to supply the Atzlanian sacrificial altars with Chinese coolies and whose services to Atzlan had been ended forever by Ralph Trainor.

In the room were many articles and ornaments which would have struck Ramon Diaz as incongruous in a race which had been cut off from the world for four centuries. There was a cuckoo clock and other items which had seeped in from the outer world.

And the floor was carpeted, not with Aztec matting but with a huge red and yellow Chinese rug.

Matzla threw himself upon a pile of cushions and awaited with ill concealed eagerness the arrival of the white women.

Presently they entered, escorted by half a dozen female slaves.

When the white prisoners had arrived the new king had been upon a journey of military inspection in the lower end of the valley, but several young noblemen had whispered to him that two of the three women had skin like white marble and one of them had hair like spun gold. Matzla, who loved pretty women, had no intention of per-

mitting such treasures to languish in his mother's service.

THE women came into the room unaware that they were to be presented to royalty. Understanding nothing of what was said to them and around them, they did not know that the old king was dead.

The mat over the doorway of his majesty's apartment was lifted by a soldier who wore a golden cuirass and a helmet of wood carved to resemble a mountain lion. The slaves pushed the women into the room and immediately prostrated themselves.

Matzla gazed at them for a second with heavy eyes and then his indifference dropped from him. He sat bolt upright and stared in unbelieving delight at the golden beauty of Edith Hammond and the even more effulgent loveliness of the French girl, whose hair was dark but whose skin was nearly as white as the blonde's.

The chamberlain, a portly Indian magnificently dressed, ordered in pantomime that the white women drop on their knees and touch forehead to the ground. While they hesitated, Mrs. Rawlins stepped forward.

"I don't know who you are," she declared, "but I want to protest against holding American citizens against their will. The United States Army and Navy will make you brown scum answer for what you do to white women."

Matzla regarded her with disfavor.

"Take away that one," he said in Aztec, pointing with his finger. "My royal mother may retain her. The other two I shall keep. Bring them to me."

A strong hand grabbed an arm of each girl and pushed her towards the royal couch.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

Blood Will Tell

By WILLIAM
MERRIAM ROUSE



"Your lodging will be made ready for you," said John Brett's wilderness host—and Brett saw a grave being dug!

THE house made a black square against the starlit sky, except for one second story window that was blocked out by the yellow glow of candlelight. About the building there was no sound and no sign of life other than the one lighted window. The rustlings and the whispers in the darkness outside were those of the forest.

John Brett, sitting his horse in the shelter of the night, waited for some break in the mysterious quiet before he asked for lodging. The feeling of danger near at hand was one that he had known many times during his late service in the War of 1812. The faint creak of saddle leather, the jingle of the bit, were loud in his ears.

They had told him back in Pleasant Valley that it was folly to go deeper into the Adirondack wilderness without a brace of pistols holstered on his saddle, for there was no more than a shadow of law in this new country.

So Brett was cautious, knowing that he had strayed among roads which were at times little more than blazed trails. According to his directions he should have come to a log tavern hours before this.

Suddenly a human form appeared silhouetted in the lighted square above him. He drew a sharp intake of breath, and his apprehension vanished. For a girl of lovely, slender outline stood squarely in the center of the bright window. Slowly she moved away.

Brett dismounted and tied his horse to a tree. He went forward confidently, but as he drew near to the house he discovered that the grounds in front of it were inclosed by a solid stone wall at least ten feet high. There were heavy plank gates, barring a carriage drive, but they were fastened from the inside.

It would hardly be seemly, he thought, to batter with boot and fist and alarm the household. So he followed the wall until it joined the house and there discovered a small door, like a postern, directly below the lighted window. There was no knocker, bell or latch, but when Brett pushed it moved on well oiled hinges.

He hesitated, stepped backward, and looked up. The girl had come again to the window. She stood there in full view, close to the glass, for a long moment before she turned back to the room. Was she expecting some one at this hour, and in this wilderness?

BRETT pushed the door wide and entered. There was light ahead of him, at the end of a long corridor. He would go on and apologize for having come in without announcement. There must be some one awake on the ground floor or that door would not be unlocked and unguarded.

The room ahead was a vast apartment, with a fire burning on the hearth in spite of June weather. Brett saw that much before he entered. Then he found himself staring at an old man whose presence wiped out every other impression, whose dark and burning eyes seemed to pierce to the inmost recesses of his being.

The old man sat in a high backed chair by the fireplace, with his enormous bony hands gripping its arms. His gigantic, emaciated frame filled the stout hickory chair and his white head

rose above the slats of the back. He spoke no word and made no movement.

"Sir," said Brett, "I ask your pardon for entering your house in this manner, but I could not find either knocker or bell on the door. I have lost my way, and I hoped to get lodging here."

The silence lasted almost beyond endurance. At last the tight lips parted and words fell harshly on the stillness of the room.

"Your lodging will be made ready for you!"

Before Brett could say a word of thanks to that strange hospitality a door in the shadows at one end of the long room opened and the girl whom he had seen in the window entered. She was even more lovely than he had thought, but her face was stricken white and her eyes burned with the same light that was in the eyes of the old man.

"Is this the—the one?" she asked, in a whisper.

"Who else?" barked the old man.

John Brett felt as though a clammy fog were drawing in around him. His stern host was a gentleman and the fair haired, dark eyed girl was beautiful and no less well bred; nevertheless there was inexplicable danger in the very air.

Brett could not understand it. He knew that his own appearance freed him of any suspicion of being one of the rowdies who infested the north country. There was, indeed, little civilization between Albany and Montreal, but his dress, from tall beaver hat and long tailed coat to varnished boots, proclaimed him of the same class as the people of this house.

"My name," he said at length, "is John Brett. Perhaps you have mistaken me for some one else."

The girl turned to the old man, who

moved his head vigorously from side to side.

"We have not mistaken you," he said, "and it does not matter what you call yourself."

Now Brett was not of a temper to stand trifling at any time, and he grew angry.

"May I ask," he demanded, "to whom I am indebted for this remarkable welcome?"

The girl gave a little gasp. The old man smiled grimly.

"Clever!" he remarked. "You are trying to make me believe that you have blundered in here, that you do not know that this is the house of Thaddeus Drake."

"I have never before heard the name, sir," replied Brett. "I have papers—"

"Papers can be forged," interrupted Drake. He became sarcastic. "Of course you would be prepared to give an account of yourself if you were caught here! Permit me, innocent stranger, to present you to my grand-niece, Miss Cynthia Drake. She has been showing herself in her window all night to give an appearance of unwariness to this house, so that you would surely come in."

"Sir, I assure you—"

"You do protest too much," said Drake, all the lightness suddenly gone from his tone. "I will trouble you for your weapons, and I may as well tell you that if you attempt to use them you will not live five seconds!"

"I have no weapons!" cried Brett, furiously.

AT that Thaddeus Drake lifted one great hand and pulled a bell cord.

Instantly a door near his chair opened and three men, armed with long rifles, stepped briskly into the room. They were hard looking mountaineers,

in butternut shirts and coonskin caps. There was a loophole in the door that had hidden them, and Brett realized that he would have been shot down if he had made a hostile move.

The men stood waiting for orders, their eyes on Drake's face. The girl had drawn away, with hands pressed against her mouth.

John Brett had been a soldier too long to submit to capture while he had his legs under him. He leaped backward, whirled, and plunged down the hallway. Running doubled over, he crowded the wall, expecting that a bullet would follow him.

He hurled himself against the door. It was closed with a bar which ran from wall to wall, with the ends out of sight in the masonry. Slowly Brett turned and walked back into the room from which he had fled. The four men and the girl were waiting there in a profound and ominous silence.

"Now you can search him," said Thaddeus Drake.

Brett shrugged and lifted his arms. One of the woodsmen stood in front of him with a rifle pointed at his chest. The others approached from each side. They went through the pockets of his coat. One passed the flowered silk of his waistcoat and swore mightily. He tore at the buttons and revealed the silver hilt of a small dagger rising above the band of Brett's nankeen pantaloons. The leather sheath dropped to the floor and the man raised the dagger for Drake to see.

"He tries to escape," said the old man to Cynthia. "He lies about his weapons. He is a thug, dressed like a gentleman. Blood will tell."

"That bodkin is hardly a weapon!" cried Brett. "I have carried it since my first military service!"

"A bodkin, rightly placed, would

serve well," replied the grim old man. "What has Joel Stacey paid you to murder me?"

"I do not know what you are talking about!" protested Brett. "I do not know who Joel Stacey is! I am in this county on legitimate business."

"He persists in the masquerade!" shrugged Drake, turning to the girl. "Take him away, Adkins! You know what to do!"

The eldest of the mountaineers, a grizzled veteran of the woods, nodded to the others. With an iron hand on each arm and the muzzle of a rifle pressing against his back, John Brett was led the length of the room. A door opened before him and a blow on the shoulder sent him spinning over the threshold. The door closed, with the sound of an iron bolt shooting home.

Brett had brought up against a table. He stood leaning upon it for a moment while he recovered his self control. The room was bare except for that table, a chair, and a candle which burned in a tin bracket on the wall. There was one window, and beyond the small panes of glass he saw moving lights and heard faintly the voices of men.

Brett went to the fireplace and looked up the chimney. The flue was too small even for an attempt at escape that way. He stepped to the window and peered out, with his hands cupped against the glass.

Outside was a rear courtyard, walled like the front inclosure. At the far end outbuildings clustered. In the foreground Adkins sat on a chopping block, long rifle across his knee and his gaze fixed on the window of the prisoner's room.

Two other men were digging with pick and shovel. They had begun to cut an opening in the ground approximate-

ly six feet long and three feet wide. They worked furiously, and the heap of earth beside the hole grew from moment to moment.

Brett turned away, and found himself wiping a damp forehead. This thing was only now becoming real to him. And yet it was easy to understand. He had blundered in where another man had been expected.

THE grating of the bolt on his door brought him to the alert.

He seized the chair and leaped behind the table. The door opened slowly and Cynthia Drake stood framed in the doorway. Brett put down his chair.

The girl glanced over her shoulder, listened, and came in. Slim white fingers clutched nervously at the folds of her flowered muslin skirt. She struggled to speak.

"Mr. Brett," she whispered, brokenly, "if only you will tell me the truth I will plead with him again merely to hold you prisoner!"

Not even the girl had believed him. Brett's pleasant mouth drew into hard lines.

"I have told as much of the truth as I was given a chance to tell," he said.

"Please!" she begged. "No matter what you are, I don't want this thing to happen! Have you looked out of the window?"

"Yes," replied Brett.

"That is the lodging that he promised you! And my uncle keeps his word!"

"I told the truth, but not all of it," said Brett. "I have a commission to execute for His Excellency the Governor of New York. In a measure, it is confidential."

"But the dagger!" she exclaimed.

"After that Uncle Thaddeus would not believe anything!"

"Nor you, either?" asked Brett. "As a cavalry officer I carried a little dagger for the *coup de grace*, to myself or another. It was never considered a weapon of offense, although I suppose it might be used as one. A man dying on the field of battle, in agony, prefers to go quickly."

"I understand," she breathed. "I did not know what you have just told me. On your honor, you are not Joel Stacey's man?"

"I am not," replied Brett, firmly. "Who is Joel Stacey?"

"He is a great land owner, and he wants the Drake holding. None of the titles here in this wilderness have been made valid yet. If Stacey can dispose of my uncle he will take possession of our farms and woodland, and file claim. One of our best men, Tom Macdougall, has been working for Stacey as a servant and reporting to us."

"We had expected a raid. But Macdougall sent word to-day that Stacey had hired a man from Albany to come here and do the work by stealth. Murder! To-night! It is not strange that my Uncle Thaddeus should think you were that man. You answer the description. A powerful looking young man who was dressed like a gentleman, Tom said."

"I was warned that there was no law in this country," said Brett.

"What law we have is in the hand of tavern justices of the peace!" exclaimed the girl, bitterly. "If it were not for Uncle Thaddeus you can guess what would happen to me! He is the last of the Drakes."

"Aye," replied Brett, slowly. "I understand now."

"I do not believe that you are a murderer!" she cried suddenly. "I

could not believe it when I first saw you!"

"To-morrow I'll prove that I'm not," answered Brett. "But now I've got to leave! That grave is nearly finished!"

HE had taken a single step toward the door when it opened and the doorway filled with the great form of Thaddeus Drake. There he paused, with his men crowding behind him, and looked at the girl.

"Cynthia," he said, "it is hard to believe that you have the blood of Sir Francis Drake in your veins."

"Uncle Thaddeus!" Her voice broke. She ran a little way toward him, with outstretched hands. "Won't you wait?"

"For what?" asked the old man. "This fellow came here to kill me, with malice aforethought! That is murder! He asked my hospitality, and planned to stab me when I was deceived and helpless! Asleep, perhaps! So that Joel Stacey could take my land—and you, my dear! Since there is no law here to deal with scoundrels of his stripe, I must do it myself!"

The girl's arms fell to her sides. Her head bowed. John Brett was measuring distances, calculating his chances of wrenching a rifle away from one of Drake's stern woodsmen. Once out there in the courtyard beside his grave, the end would be inevitable.

"Cynthia!" said Drake. "Go to your chamber!"

The light tap of the girl's little slippers was the only sound in the room. That would have been the moment, when the attention of his captors was divided, for Brett to put his forlorn hope to the test. But he could not take the risk that a bullet or swinging rifle butt might find Cynthia Drake.

She was gone, with her hands clenched in the folds of her skirt.

The old man turned to Brett. "You have had a little time to make your peace with Heaven," he said. "Come!"

Two of the mountaineers moved forward, their rifles held ready. There was another one in the doorway. Drake stepped to one side, watchfully. He was to be reckoned with as well as the younger men. Brett waited for the nearest of the woodsmen to come within reach.

At that moment the sound of rifle shot ripped through the silence. The men who were advancing upon Brett halted, listening. From the front of the house came a riot of sound. Blows, the rending of wood, and the cries of a triumphant onslaught mingled and surged through the night.

"The gate!" thundered Drake.

He hurled himself out of the room, and the others vanished with him. John Brett was alone. He sprang for the door just as an uproar started in the courtyard. A bullet came crashing through the window.

The big room which Brett had first entered was deserted now. From all around the house came the sound of battle. Cynthia Drake would be upstairs. Brett flung open doors until he found a hallway and stairs. He went bounding upward, two steps at a time.

Light came from a doorway at the front of the house. Brett ran that way. He halted on the threshold of a chamber gay with chintz, gleaming with polished mahogany. Cynthia Drake turned from a window, to stare at him with horror-filled eyes.

"You!" she exclaimed in a low, stricken voice. "So you are one of them! Dear God, I would not have believed it!"

Brett took a step forward, strug-

gling for words. Of course she thought that his liberty meant that he was one of Stacey's men! One of her hands came swiftly from behind her. The barrel of a pocket pistol gleamed in the candlelight.

Brett sprang forward with an incoherent cry. He saw the powder flash in the pan under the hammer. He tasted acrid smoke. Something tugged at his sleeve. Then he had the girl in his arms and was looking down into her tortured face with an infinite pity.

"You little idiot!" he whispered. "I've come to take care of you!"

She believed him. Her straining body went limp and she clung to his shoulders. The noise of battle was dying down. The thud of feet came pounding through the house. Curses and an occasional sharp cry of pain struck up from below.

"I saw them take my Uncle Thaddeus prisoner," she said. "This is the end!"

"Not yet!" Brett sprang to the window and looked out. "They're herding your men together in front. We'll try the rear! Once outside the courtyard wall, we'll have a chance!"

"There's a back stairway down from this floor," she told him. "We can get out that way!"

THEY ran through the house. Brett flung open a casement window and looked down into the courtyard where the grave that had been intended for him yawned to the winking stars.

When he thrust his head out the courtyard was empty, but immediately a little procession filed out from the house. Torches flared, and the night was driven back by a weird, red light that played strangely on the faces of four men who gathered beside the

opening in the ground. Thaddeus Drake was one of them.

"You have helped us, Drake," sneered a fattish man of middle age, whose bald head shone in the torchlight. He pointed to the grave. "Or did you get this ready for Slugger Barton, here?"

He nodded toward a burly young man who carried a pistol dangling from each hand. This fellow was dressed in the height of the New York fashion, but there was a look about his granite jaw that would have belied any covering of fine feathers.

"Is that your assassin?" asked Drake, slowly, looking the stranger up and down. "Joel Stacey knows how to choose well in such matters!"

"And I know how to outwit you, you old buzzard!" snarled Stacey. "When we discovered that Macdougall was your spy, we disposed of him and let his story stand. While you were waiting for one man, we brought a score to your gates!"

"If I'm to be murdered, get it over with!" boomed Thaddeus Drake. "That will spare me your conversation! Have you got the courage to do it yourself?"

"I'm too smart to do it myself!" cried Stacey. "I won't even know when it's done. I'll be in the house, hunting out the pretty Cynthia."

Although his hands were bound behind his back, Thaddeus Drake lurched forward and kicked.

Stacey reeled with a howl of pain.

"Get on with it, Slugger!" he yelled. "By the gods! I believe I'll watch it after all."

"It ain't but a minute's work," said Barton, calmly. He looked to the priming of his pistols. The fourth man drove Thaddeus Drake back against the wall with a blow of his fist.

John Brett had drawn himself up into the window until he sat poised on the ledge, with his feet under him. He turned to Cynthia, whom he had held back from the sight of what was going on below.

"Go!" he whispered. "Find my horse and ride! I'll catch you on one of their mounts!"

She turned and disappeared. Brett raised himself upright, balancing precariously on the window ledge. Then he jumped straight for the head of the man with the pistols.

His bootheels, held close together, struck Barton on one shoulder, at the base of the neck. With the body of the man as a spring board Brett leaped again and landed on hands and knees against the ground.

He was up in time to see Barton settle to rest, with eyes staring and mouth hanging open. Brett seized the fallen pistols just as the other Stacey henchman recovered from his astonishment and sprang forward.

Brett fired. The man doubled over and fell. Then Brett faced Joel Stacey, who leveled a pistol as he backed fearfully away. Stacey's bullet fanned his cheek. He took careful aim and when flame lanced out from the pistol Stacey clutched at his shoulder and spun around with a shriek.

"You should have killed him," said the voice of Thaddeus Drake.

"I have another use for that man later on!" panted Brett. "Is there a door in the wall? Quick! Stacey's yelp will bring them out here like wolves!"

THE old man was already leading the way to a narrow, heavily barred door. In a moment they were outside, and Drake's hands were free. An uproar was swelling in the house.

"Their horses must be hidden near here," said Brett. "We'll take a couple of the best of them and ride! Your men will be safe enough. Stacey won't risk a massacre. It was you he wanted."

"Go on if you like!" exclaimed Thaddeus Drake, sternly. "I shall go back for Cynthia."

"But she's already on my horse, well away from here by now!" cried Brett. He pulled at Drake's arm. "Come, for Heaven's sake! They'll be out here, and shooting, in a moment more!"

A dark blot loomed in the starlight ahead of them and Brett, with nothing but empty pistols to defend himself, leaped aside from the roadway. Thaddeus Drake stood still, a lion at bay.

The blot resolved itself into three horses, with a rider on the one in the middle.

The voice of Cynthia Drake came like music out of the darkness.

"I am glad you are so tall, Uncle Thaddeus! Otherwise I might not have recognized you! I've got Stacey's black jumper here, and another fine horse! The rest I turned loose."

The door in the wall was open now and men were coming out, filling the night with their yells. A rifle barked. Brett, swinging into the saddle, heard the whine of a bullet overhead. But the three riders wheeled, bending low as

the darkness spotted with fire behind them. There was a moment of danger, and then they were in the shelter of the forest.

When there was a mile or more between them and the enemy they pulled down to a walk to breathe their horses. Brett rode close to Cynthia.

"But for you," he said, "your uncle and I might not have made it!"

"She's a Drake!" rumbled the old man. "Landless, after tonight, but a Drake nevertheless!"

"Not landless, sir," contradicted Brett. "I tried to tell you that I had a commission from His Excellency, the Governor. It is to investigate the land titles in these northern counties. I shot Joel Stacey very carefully, so that he could be brought to trial!"

At first only a little joyous, incoherent murmur from Cynthia broke the silence. Then the great voice of her uncle boomed out.

"Young man, I have been thinking that you said your name was Brett. Are you related to Colonel Ephraim Brett, who commanded a regiment of foot in the army of General Washington?"

"Yes, sir," replied Brett, with a chuckle. "He was my father."

"Ah!" exclaimed Thaddeus Drake. "Cynthia, mark my words! Blood will always tell!"

THE END.

The 294th Novel

From ARGOSY to appear in book form:

The Longhorn Feud, By Max Brand

\$2.50

Dodd, Mead & Co.

1933

This book can be obtained by sending the price to The Frank A. Munsey Company, 280 Broadway, N. Y. (Canada, add 25c for duty.)



Argonotes

The Readers' Viewpoint



ARGOSY pays \$1 for each letter printed. Send your letter to "Argonotes" Editor, ARGOSY, 280 Broadway, N. Y. C.

DOESN'T like MacIsaac's heroes:

Lawrence, Kans.

Just a line to request that you keep the four serials in ARGOSY as always and if you want to make any change add one more to make five! There are any number of magazines with short stories on the market, but only ARGOSY has the *serials*. Your short stories are good, but I, for one, buy ARGOSY for the serials.

I read ARGOSY from cover to cover, but don't like Indian stories nor fantasies when they come too often.

MacIsaac is your best writer, but I don't like his leading men.

Isn't it about time for another Seltzer story? And let's have a World War serial once in awhile—and I don't mean air fighting either.

Lots of luck to the best little magazine in the world!

E. MARCUM.

WOULD feel lost:

Bronx, N. Y.

For the last five years I have been reading ARGOSY, and I would feel lost if I missed a week. I believe it is the only honestly interesting magazine of its kind. Perhaps the only magazine of its kind.

Of the recent serials I think Theodore Roscoe's "The Kingdom of Hell" was way ahead of the rest, with Murray Leinster's "The Earth-Shaker" and Max Brand's "The Masterman" following behind. Let's have more *Zorro*, W. C. Tuttle, and Albert Payson Terhune stories.

Yours truly,

E. GINSBERG.

A FIFTY-YEAR reader bursts into poetic tribute:

Brazil, Ind.

Having read the ARGOSY since the days of the *Quaker* and the initial copy of *The Golden Argosy* down to the present time without throwing any stones or flowers I feel that I have now

been acquainted long enough to know just how well the Old Ship sails:

When I wish to go
And adventures know,
Or to roam with Romance free;
When I wish to ride
By a Ranger's side,
Or sail on a tropic sea,
I waste no time
But I take a dime
And hie where the news-stands be.
There, with outstretched hand,
I make demand,
"Please give me an ARGOSY."

Then I board the ship
For a happy trip;
For a journey filled with joy;
In the wafting breeze
I find an ease
That has not the least alloy,
And I bless the time
When I take my dime
And hie where the news-stands be
Where, with outstretched hand,
I make demand,
"Please give me an ARGOSY."

In justifying my criticism I wish to say that I hold a first grade, life, state teacher's certificate of Indiana; have had many articles, both prose and verse, published in nationally known magazines and newspapers and have published one book of verse.

Hoping the rhyming lines of appreciation may not be displeasing to you, I am,

Yours very truly,

PAUL PICKETT.

ANYWHERE on earth for a dime:

Erie, Pa.

We have been reading ARGOSY for seven years, never missed an issue. Even in times like these we manage our ARGOSY. It's the only thing we know of that will take you anywhere you want to go, to anything you want to see, for ten cents.

Why don't you ever print a letter from Erie?

There must be plenty of readers, as our dealer says ARGOSY is his best seller.

We haven't a thing to complain of in ARGOSY. We take it as we get it. Though there are a few stories that we think a bit better than others. The Mr. likes the *Hazeltine* stories best. I like weird ones. What is wrong with those who don't like the puzzles? Some do, and so have 'em in, say we.

In the May 6 issue were two things I liked very much. The first was that "dandy" dog story by Terhune. The second was a request for a motorcycle story. I don't see how you have missed having one even this long. That's the "best sport" and should have a place in ARGOSY. With that subject and your fine writers you should be able to have a perfectly lovely story quite soon. All us throttle twisters will be waiting, from coast to coast.

MR. AND MRS. C. ANDREWS.

A SERIAL fan promises a fair trial:

Buffalo, N. Y.

Please allow me to use a few lines telling of my continued appreciation of the ARGOSY visits. All stories are enjoyed, though some, with some authors, are liked better than others. I was interested in the notice of the summer schedule

in the last number. I believe I shall like it, although I am a serial fan, and feel I am cheated if there are less than four in each number. But I believe in giving your suggestion a trial before finding fault. The old ARGOSY is the best, cleanest magazine on the market, and we must not kick if we do not have what pleases us individually in every issue.

MRS. N. H. BROWN.

AWARDS:

Cincinnati, Ohio.

Were I to make any awards for outstanding literary contributions during the past year, I would pay tribute to the following:

To Fred MacIsaac, for his entertaining *Bill Peepe* stories. They certainly do hit the spot.

To Geo. F. Worts for that most enjoyable character, *Gillian Hazeltine*, whose adventures are full of suspense.

To Allan Vaughan Elston, whose stories, with their really fine plots, never disappoint.

To Will McMorro, for stories that contain enough snap and wit to make them outstanding.

And finally, to Theodore Roscoe because his stories are packed with punch and enough thrills to satisfy anyone.

FRANK EGNER.



Looking Ahead!

Ammunition Up!

Jimmie Cordie and his soldiers of fortune take a flier in gun-running in China—with the Japanese setting traps for them. A long novelette.

By W. Wirt

Law on the Flying U

Chip of the Flying U, most popular of cowboy heroes, makes his bow to ARGOSY.

By B. M. Bower

The Black Sorcerer

A novelette of France in the days of swordsmen and courtiers and poisoners and intriguers.

By Forrest Rosaire

COMING TO YOU IN NEXT WEEK'S ARGOSY—SEPT. 16

6A-9

A Sensational New Business That Can Sweep You to Riches Almost Overnight

This is among the first public announcements of what is undoubtedly the most amazing money-making opportunity ever offered to the readers of this—or any other—magazine. It tells how any ambitious, level-headed man can establish—practically overnight—a remarkable new kind of business that can pay a steady net cash profit of \$40.00 a day for one-man operation—a business that offers unlimited opportunity—a business that is destined to make many men independently wealthy.

HERE, briefly, are the “high-spots” of this thrilling new business that will create “fortunes” for those with the vision and foresight to get in on the ground floor now:

- 1** An utterly new product with a natural, staple demand and big repeat business, yet one that has all of the appeal of a novelty.
- 2** Requires no house-to-house canvassing or selling. You simply manufacture. Stores will sell your entire output.
- 3** Produces \$41.00 a day net profit, selling your entire output at wholesale.
- 4** A protected product and a protected process. Only our licensees can make or sell. Thus you are protected against cut-throat price competition.
- 5** Pays steadily; no lean seasons.
- 6** Big profits to be made in smallest town or largest city.
- 7** Absolutely no experience needed to be successful.
- 8** No expensive equipment needed. Your whole investment will be less than your first week's potential income.

This is truth; not fiction—fact; not theory. To the best of our knowledge, no other business in America offers one-tenth the opportunity for profit and independence.

Vision Turned to Reality

A few months ago, this amazing money-making product was nothing more than a dream—the vision of its inventor, Mr. R. H. Newitt of Chicago.

Today, the Newitt-Metzger process is a reality with every detail perfected—complete and tested plans of operation worked out—all necessary equipment ready to turn over to those who are prepared to develop this new “gold mine.”

No Selling—No Canvassing

Do not confuse this new product with anything you have ever heard of before. It is not a potato chip, not candy, not a cheese chip, not a paste preparation—but a natural product that comes from the sky, from the ground, and from the air. It is not like anything you ever saw or heard of, or imagined. The simple truth about it is stranger than your wildest dream. And you can be the first to supply this great demand.

\$100.00 a Week, Net, to Start

According to accurate figures, the very minimum of the first operation should produce a net cash profit of at least \$100.00 a week. Since it is possible to make \$41.00 a day, you can see that it would take only two and a half days of full operation to make a profit of \$100.00. This, we figure to be a minimum. We would not be interested in licensing men who could not make at least that much every week. Then, as demand increases, other men can be put to work for you and you can double, triple, or quadruple your weekly profit as steady repeat business develops.

No Expensive Equipment

Ordinarily a proposition as big as this would require the purchase of expensive equipment with which to manufacture this remarkable new product. But in this case our manufacturing process has been so simplified that we can furnish you with everything you need, start off making a profit the very first day—all for an investment of less than \$150.00.

No Experience Needed

Absolutely no experience is required to quickly become successful in this thrilling and fascinating new business. We tell you how to start—how to establish yourself quickly—how to operate the business the very day you are ready to go. We furnish all necessary plans, systems and

equipment. Any man with ordinary intelligence and a real desire to succeed is bound to make money.

Small Town or Big City

Another feature that makes this business unlike any other is that it can be operated anywhere. No matter where you live—in the smallest town or the largest city—you can establish yourself practically overnight and start enjoying an independent income at once. From the foregoing facts, you can readily see that this is not a business for the timid operator who is satisfied to make a bare living, but for the wide-awake, aggressive go-getter who wants to see his energy and enthusiasm produce the greatest possible results in the shortest possible time.

Facts Sent Free

To all such men, we request permission to mail an unusual and complete presentation. After you have read the amazing facts and figures in this presentation, then you can decide whether or not an initial investment of less than \$150.00 is too much to ask for a complete business that can pay back that investment in the first four days of operation, and then continue to pay as much as \$252.00 a week net profit for single equipment operation, and up to as high as a thousand a week net profit to those men who have the ability to organize and direct other men.

Act Quickly

There is no time to lose. Today this proposition is new. Tomorrow it will be a little older—next week a little older still. So get the facts without a moment's delay. It's the newcomers in any enterprise of this sort—the “ground floor operators”—who always reap the richest rewards.

There is no coupon on this ad. We do not want to hear from coupon clippers. If you don't agree that this is worth a letter—or a telegram—you are not the man for the business.

So write or wire today—without the slightest cost or obligation—and get the information that can make you independent for life.

KING K. CO. Dept. K-79
54 West Illinois St.
CHICAGO ILLINOIS

Keep regular

with

EX-LAX

the chocolated
LAXATIVE

WHEN you need a laxative, wouldn't you rather take a piece of delicious chocolate than something bitter and nasty?

Of course you would! And millions of people feel the same way about it. That's why they use Ex-Lax — the chocolated laxative.

Ex-Lax doesn't taste a bit like medicine. No spoons! No bottles! No bitter or messy medicines! It's just like eating delicious chocolate.

Ex-Lax is *so* mild — *so* gentle — for 27 years mothers have given it to their children. And yet, it's so effective that even the strongest men find it unnecessary to take unpleasant laxatives again.

Be sure to ask for *genuine* Ex-Lax — spelled E-X-L-A-X. Over 50,000 druggists sell Ex-Lax — and recommend it. 10c and 25c.

Or write for free sample, to Ex-Lax, Inc., Dept. Y93 P. O. Box 170, Times Plaza Station, Brooklyn, N. Y.